



INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF KASHMIR

Ghulam Nabi Atash



Jammu & Kashmir
Academy of Art, Culture and Languages



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GHULAM NABI ATASH

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Edited by
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Intangible Heritage of Kashmir

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FOREWORD

J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, right from its beginning, has been in the forefront of all initiatives of documentation of the rich wealth of our art, heritage, literature and culture through whatever means possible, for its preservation and appreciation far and wide. Though, so far the Academy has successfully come out with a number of ambitious projects and publications fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities, there was a dire need for unconventional interventions to preserve some undocumented areas of our art, literature and culture. In the face of the threat of extinction of indigenous cultures due to many socio-cultural reasons, unprecedented initiatives are required. It is with this sense of cultural urgency that we decided to publish full-fledged projects on Intangible Heritage of Jammu and Intangible Heritage of Kashmir separately. The projects are ambitious attempts at documenting this less explored dimension of our cultural legacy. The purpose is to document and preserve it for posterity, besides familiarising our young generation with our rich and dynamic legacy.

The attempt is the first of its kind and cannot be called comprehensive but the compiler has tried to include as many topics as he could. The result is this compendium of Kashmir's intangible heritage. There might be some shortcomings but the fact is that it is the first of its kind.

I am highly thankful to the learned scholar and researcher Mr Ghulam Nabi Aatash who painstakingly took up such an arduous project and completed it within the stipulated time with all relevant minutiae. Though the project took more than the expected time to print for some technical reasons, I feel highly elated to finally place it before our valued readers.

I am also thankful to the reviewers of the manuscript who helped us make it better in terms of quality.

I also place on record my appreciation for Dr Abid Ahmad, Editor English in the Academy, for professionally editing the manuscript.

(Dr) Aziz Hajini
Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage is an ever-living reality that does not die with time. It lives on through various modes of perpetuation including those of word and deed. Heritage is not just hardware visible only to the physical eye. It encompasses our attitude to life, our modes of living and the existential choices we make through the thick and thin of life. Heritage is an eternity that stands through our collective veneration.

Though our obsession with a mechanical lifestyle has ruined the softer side of life, but equally noticeable is our thirst for our lost soul through our concern and love for heritage and culture. The consoling factor is that the budding generation is becoming more aware of the critical importance of heritage and culture.

Recent times have contributed a lot in sensitizing us more towards the finer aspects of heritage and culture including its technical classification. Traditionally the heritage was restricted to the realms usually believed to be tangible, but now intangible heritage has assumed an equal status. While tangible heritage is what is tangible, touchable, intangible heritage is something that lies beyond tangible heritage. Intangible heritage is broadly defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”

Intangible heritage includes such heritage sites as creation myths, mythology, legends, songs, music, dance, drama, skills, cuisine, crafts, festivals, etc. It is not any physical form but can be recognized through some physical expression only. Interestingly, this heritage is believed to be the living heritage and the mainspring of humanity's cultural diversity. Its preservation is the guarantee of creative expressions of human society. Therefore, its cultural importance is existential and non-negotiable. However, as much its importance, so less is the attention paid to it.

That way, the present volume is critically important. It covers the multifaceted dimensions of the intangible heritage of the Kashmir region of our state in a very professional and scholarly manner. It is also a brilliant attempt at preserving many long-forgotten dimensions of our rich intangible heritage. The volume has been compiled by one of the celebrated scholars, researchers and writers of our state, Mr Ghulam Nabi Aatash who deserves all accolades for compiling this ambitious compendium on the intangible heritage of Kashmir.

The book is the first of its kind and cannot be called as complete and comprehensive. But it is rich in detail and is a milestone towards documenting the intangible heritage of Kashmir. There might be some overlapping which is inevitable in view of the technical definitions involved. There are some topics which cannot be literally categorized as intangible but they come in the larger gamut of the definition of the term and make a necessary corollary to it. They have been retained as contained in the manuscript. Similarly some amount of repetition is obvious in such a publication.

The book is part first of the two-volume project, whose second part is on Intangible Heritage of Jammu.

Dr Abid Ahmad

KASHMIR – MYTHS & LEGENDS

A. SATISAR - THE HINDU MYTH

The early history of Kashmir is wrapped in mystery. According to legend once the valley of Kashmir was a big lake called Satisar, the lake of Sati (Durga). In it dwelt numerous Pishachas, Yakshas and Nagas, headed by a ferocious demon whose name was Jaldev or Jaludhar. Prajapati Kashyapa, a great sage, son of Marichi and grandson of Bhrama, practiced penance for a long time. The gods Drunhina, Upendra and Rudhra felt compassion for him and at last the goddess Sharika in the form of a myna ("Haar" in Kashmiri) carried a pebble in her beak, which she dropped upon this wicked demon and killed him. The pebble grew into Hari Parbat the Olympus of the Hindus. Thereafter the whole water was drained through a hole in the earth at Baramulla. Since then the land which thus emerged out of water came to be known as Kashyamar or Kashmir, named after the sage Kashyapa.

In another account it is said that Balbhadr, the brother of Vishnu, drained the lake with his ploughshare, whereupon Vishnu slew the demon. The name of Kashmir also implies "Land dessicated from water". In Sanskrit "Ka" means "water" and "Shimira" means "to desiccate"

According to Nilamatapurana "Kashmir is Parvati - that is the great goddess Sati - "the real daughter of the Himalayas gave her body to be the sacred Kashmir. According to legends about the birth of Kashmir in Nilmatpurana, the land of "Kashmira" was submerged for six manvantaras since the beginning of the Kalpa by a vast lake six Yojanas long and three Yojanas wide. The lake was called Satisara. In the seventh manvantaras the water of the lake was drained off through an outlet made with a plough by Ananta at the order of Vishnu who, alongwith other gods and goddesses, had come there to kill the demon Jalodbhava - invincible in the waters. The story runs further informing how after the death of Jalodbhava, the Pishachas and the descend-

ants of Manu were settled there by Kashyapa to live in company of the Nagas, the original inhabitants of the valley.

B. KASMIR – THE BUDDHIST MYTH

It is said that Buddhism came to Kashmir in the time of King Ashoka in about 250 BC. But there is a legend with regard to the arrival of Buddhism in Kashmir. According to the legend Kashmir was a lake dwelt by a dragon. In ancient times Lord Buddha conquered a Rakhshas in Udhaan. While returning he flew over the lake and said to his disciple Ananda that after his Nirvana Arhat Madhyantik would bring the place into the fold of Buddhism. After the Nirvana of Lord Buddha, Madhyantika came to this place and sat on a tree on a high mountain. He manifested many spiritual miracles there. The dragon in the lake was impressed by the Arhat and offered to fulfill a wish he made. Arhat demanded a small space in the lake. The Dragon was pleased to give him the space. As soon as Arhat occupied the small space in the water, he swelled his body to such an extent that he drank up the whole lake. The dragon fled to some unknown place.

It is said that in Chinese "Kasmir" means "who will go in?" The legend is that when Arhat drank up all the water and the dragon went away, people on the mountain tops were astonished and were asking one another "Kasmir (who will go in)". Huien Tsang who visited Kashmir from 631 A.D to 633 A. D has called this place Kia – Shi – mi – lo and in ancient Chinese and Greek manuscripts it is called "Kaspira". Tara Nath, who wrote *A History of Buddhism in India* refers to the legendary colour of the beginning of Buddhism in Kashmir, Dr. Advaitavadini Kaul wrote in his book *Buddhist Savants of Kashmir: Their Contribution Abroad*, that "It is infested with legendary colouring and related how Majjhantika received hostile treatment at the hands of the local Naga people and their chief and how he was finally able to win over to Buddhist faith the entire Naga population along with the King through his supernatural powers."

C. BAGH – E - SULEMAAN – ONE MORE MYTH

There is an old tradition among Kashmiris that Prophet Solomon visited this place during ancient times. He arrived in his flying throne and stopped on a hilltop. The hilltop is called Takht-i-Sulaiman (Sulaiman Teang). It was he who ordered the drainage of the water from this place. Jinns (demons) loyal to him drained off the water of the lake. A strong and powerful demon (Jin) named "Kashaf" worked hard for the purpose. Solomon was pleased with him and as a reward he was allowed to go to his beloved and marry her. The name of his beloved was "Meer". It is said this place was given the name "Kashafmeer" which became "Kashmeer" in local language. Some historians later on called this place "Bagh - i - Sulaimaan" (Garden of Solomon) because of the tradition that it was Solomon who made this place worth habitation.

D. KASHMAR – THE JEWISH MYTH

Some historians are of the opinion that Jesus visited Kashmir and his first halt was at Pahalgam, the village of shepherds. That is why there is a considerable influence of Hebrew on Kashmiri. They have identified many place names of Hebrew origin here. They called this place "Kashmar". In Hebrew "Kash" means mountain and "Mar" is "the place, home". So, the valley is a place surrounded by mountains.

However, the valley is called "Kasheer" by its inhabitants and the inhabitants are called "Kashier". Neither of the name Satisar, Kashmir, Baghe – Sulemaan, Kashmar is in vogue.

2. BIRTH OF VITASTA – THE VYETH

The main river of Kashmir has many names, Vitasta, Bihat, Hydapses, Jehlum and Vyeth. Nowadays Vyeth is the common name of this river. Some scholars say that in Kashmiri "vyeth" was "river" not for a particular one. With the passage of time the word dropped out of common parlance but remained in use for the river. Vyeth is argued to be contraction of "Vitasta" also. Vitasta is the mythological name of this river. A Nilmat-

purana myth suggests that Kashmir is Parvati, the goddess Sati, who gave her body to be that sacred place. In the days of yore this place was called Satisdes. In the words of Khalid Bashir Ahmad, author of *Jehlum: the river through my backyard* the birth of vyeth is described as under:

“Vitasta is its ritualistic and mythological name obtained from a legend as told in the Nilmatpurana. When the whole water was drained from Satisar, those who lived here were again in trouble this time because of the absence of water. Kashypa had to then plead with gods for a solution of this problem of the distressed people. Shiva, a Hindu god, the legend goes on, was moved by the plight of the people and told his consort, Parvati, to take the form of a water course. She asked him to identify a place of her emergence from the subterranean world. Shiva pitched his trishul (trident) in the ground and there sprang Vitasta (span) of water and the Vitasta (one of the many names of Jehlum) was thus born.”

It is said that Vitasta appeared from NEIL NAG, the present day Vernag. It has two real sources Vernag and the Veth Votur, small springs not far from Verinag. Interestingly, some other springs in the Valley are also called Neilnag.

3. PATAL - THE MYSTERIOUS UNDERWORLD

There is a folk that the Patal is an underworld place, mysterious in nature. Humans have no access to that dangerous place under the earth where snakes, who can change themselves into human beings and other dangerous and harmful creatures live. There are also some Kashmiri folk tales linked with Patal. The most famous folk tale of Kashmir, Heemal - Nagrai, has a strong connection with Pata. The hero of the story, Nagrai, the Prince of Patal, basically a Naag or serpent, crawls out of a spring and furtively enters Sadaram's bag. At home, Sadaram and his cruel wife Choura are amazed to see a beautiful boy come out of the bag. The boy tells them that he is a prince from Patal. Later on he falls in love with Heemal, the beautiful princess of Baldevpor, daughter of Balaveer. After they are

married, some differences start between the two. Heemal goes to Patal in search of Nagrai. She becomes a servant there. One day while she is busy in cooking, a pair of tongs fall accidentally into a pot filled with hot water. The young snakes thinking that it is time to eat, run towards it and get scalded. The whole Patal is angry with Heemal. She is ruthlessly treated and thrown out of Patal into Yarwan forest.

Tradition says that Nag Sasroos and his daughters came from Patal through Zevan spring and met Veshaak, the Brahman. Sasroos handed over one of his daughters to the Brahman to marry her. Their marriage resulted in vast destruction of Nirpora, the capital of Raja Nir.

Researchers say that Patal, the so-called abode of supernatural beings, is only imaginary. It was a city in North India or valley of Sindh inhabited by Nagas, where the Naag cult flourished. Nagas were inhabitants of Kashmir and when Aryans defeated them, their stories merged in the folk lore of Kashmir. There is no Patal under our earth.

4. KUKYEAAR

According to folk beliefs, demons, orgers and evil spirits are free to roam everywhere in Kashmir during six months of winter to terrify the people. They quit only after charities are performed and Tahar (rice cooked with turmeric, salt and oil) is served to them. After winter these demons and evil spirits are pressed into the begaar (forced labour), to pull Kukyeaar at some unknown place. According to folk belief Kukyeaar is either an imaginary invisible mountain or a blue pine tree. This legend is in vogue especially in South Kashmir. They return after summer and live in the valley for the six months of winter. Kukyeaar seems to be an archetype of the agreement, which according to Nilmatpurana, took place between Nagas, Pisacas, and men, after the elapse of four aeons. A group of Pisacas, who were cannibals, violent and cruel, but friendly towards the daitys, dwelt in an oasis, six Yojanas long, in the middle of sea of sand. Pisacas' chief "Nikamba" who was appointed by

Kubera, to keep the Pisacas under control and who along with his followers fight for six months with the Pisacas of that oasis. According to the agreement the men were allowed to live in the valley forever and Pisacas were freed to move everywhere. According to the instructions of NILA, the great king of Nagas, men were asked to celebrate with fervor and dedication at least sixty festivals every year in a systematic manner. In some of the festivals the willingness and happiness of Pisacas had been taken care of. Kukyeaar seems perhaps a phonetic derivation of Kukamb, the king of the Pisacas. People forgot the agreement but the archetype remained alive and has been transferred from generation to generation.

5. KAMDEV

Kama - known in Kashmir as Kamdev – is god of love, sexual instincts and beauty in Indian mythology. According to the myth when Lord Shiva refused to marry Parvati, she worshipped Kama to invoke the willingness of Lord Shiva. Kama showered a volley of arrows of flowers on Lord Shiva to induce in him love for Parvati. Lord Shiva's third eye turned into a volcano and burnt Kama to ashes. But Kama did not disappear forever; Shiva and Parvati got married. There is a saying in Kashmiri "Kamdevun kaan" (meaning arrow of Kama). A person who falls in love is said to have been hit by the arrow of Kamdev. According to mythology, as soon as Kamdev appears on the earth, flowers blossom and spring reaches its climax.

Kamdev is shown with a bow of sugarcane and five arrows, riding a parrot. The parrot is symbol of luxury and fame and the bow of sugarcane adds sweetness to personality of Kamdev. The five arrows are symbol of the five senses. Kamdev resembles Cupid, the blind god of love in Greek mythology. Kamdev, however, has no such defect as blindness. As per Indian mythology Kamdev in Kashmiri folk literature is a variegated embodiment of romance, love and beauty. He is commonly known as Kamdev but names like Madun, Madanwar, Poshe Madun are also used. He is a recurrent symbol in folk and modern literatures in Kashmir. There are many sayings re-

ferring to Kamdev such as Kamdev heu nundboon (beautiful like kamdev) Kamdevuen nazar (looking by Kamdev), Kamdevun Kaan (arrow of Kamdev).

6. YENDRAZ

“Indr”, the important “Devta” in Rigveda, is referred to in Kashmiri as “Indraz or Yendraz” meaning Inder the king. After Islam reached the valley, Yendraz got one more name “Shah Yendraz” meaning Yendar the King. Yendraz is considered very powerful. Bringing rain and blowing wind is his task. In the Kashmiri legends Yendraz is a lover of music and melody. Dance and music are performed continuously in his Darbar. Yendrazun Darbar, (royal court of Yendraz) Yendrazun Saaz are used frequently both in the folk poetry and by eminent mystic poets in Kashmiri. According to Indian mythology ten things came out during the samundarmanthan (churning of the ocean) by devtas in ancient times including Eravat (the head of an elephant), which was given to Ganpati and at last it reached god Inder, the Yendraz. Kashmiri folk poetry has preserved this myth with honour and faith. Hindu women recite the “Vanvun” verses on the occasion of “yagnopavit” (sacred thread ceremony) of boys, one of the most important ceremonies in the life of Kashmiri Pandits:

7. YECH

“Yaksha” is called “Yech” in Kashmiri. “Yaksha” is a Sanskrit word, meaning dangerous and tyrannical. Yakshas are believed to be the old inhabitants of Kashmir. It is said that they could change their form at will. They were cannibals. When other tribes entered the valley “Yakshas” were compelled to leave. It is said that they were the first people to embrace the Buddhism in Kashmir.

With the passage of time, Yakshas (Yech) entered folklore of Kashmir as supernatural beings. In the folktales, Yech is a supernatural character, having great might and cunningness. He is able to change his form as he may like. He becomes as tall as a poplar tree and as small as a cat. All his strength is hidden in

his cap and one who possesses the cap of a "Yech", becomes the master of the "Yech" who performs any work assigned to him. "Yech" is afraid of water and to keep the cap safe it is either to be kept under a water pot or under a grinder. If a "Yech" happens to get back his cap he becomes furious and powerful. A number of idioms and sayings related to "Yech" are in vogue in Kashmiri language such as: "Shure Boache Yech Koche" (a barren lady adopts even a "Yech"), "Yech Barrow" (loud cries of a Yech) and there are some place names also related to "Yech" like Yechgam, Yechhom, Yechkoot, etc. According to mythology "Yaksha" is servant of the gods. Kubeer is owner of treasures and Yaksha (Yech) and "Gohad" are the guardians of those treasures. It is also believed that Yakshas were human beings and used to eat uncooked meat. Even Aryans were afraid of Yakshas. Nilmatpurana records that in order to keep "Yakshas" happy a festival named "Yaksha Amavasi" was celebrated.

At some places in Kashmir "Yech" is called "Vay vough". However, Yech is an important character in the folklore of Kashmir.

8. NAGE GADE

"Nag" means a spring and "Gade" means fish. "Nagas" a human race, were the ancient residents of Kashmir. "Neel" was a great King of the Nagas, whose capital was "Nil Nag". Kashmiris have attributed supernatural tales to the Nagas. They believe that Nagas still live in springs because they were able to change their bodies from human beings to serpents. Serpent worship is performed by Kashmiri Hindus and the springs are sacred to them. As a mark of respect and devotion people pour milk and rice in the springs. There is a sayings in Kashmiri "Nage Gade Chi Wetchni Halal Te Kheni Haram" which means "a fish from a spring is an object to see and sinful to taste". People go and feed fish by throwing edibles into the sacred springs but never eat the fish."Nage Gade" refers to prohibited things. Veneration of the springs has been traced back to Naga worship, which was once a major religious belief in Kashmir.

RITUALS AND CEREMONIES OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

1. BIRTH OF A BABY

Though many rituals and ceremonies have undergone changes, some age - old rituals are still being performed. About the rituals of the birth of a Hindu child Sir Walter Lawrence has written: "A Hindu child is ushered into the world on a bed of soft straw of the *darb* (or *Koin*) grass, which has been rendered holy by perfumes and by the utterance of Sanskrit mantras and when the Musalmani midwife has done her part, the exact time of birth is carefully noted by the family astrologer. The birth bed is known as *Hurru*, and near the bed is placed an earthen vessel known as *hurlig*. Close to the vessel the floor is carefully swept, and a mystic figure is traced on it in chalk, and on this figure is placed a stone pestle which is worshipped by some girls of the house. Around the stone and on all four sides of the bed boiled or uncooked rice is daily scattered. The mother is known as *Losa*, and if this is her first child, she is called *Sadb Piai*. Often before the confinement a ram is brought into the room, which the patient strokes three times. She then puts a handful of rice into a basket, her mother puts in a handful of flour and her sister puts in some money. Then female relations come in, all bringing presents of figs, dates, almonds, rice and money. All these gifts are eventually given to the priest. Later the women scatter rice, flour and money around the bed, and when the child is born, if it is a boy, the assembled relations shout and rejoice. All food taken by the mother after her confinement has to be cooked on a fire worshipped by the girl and is placed in the *Hurlig*, and the girl after the fire worship anoints her forehead and the foreheads of the mother and child with ghi. For three days after the child birth the mother must eat but little, but on the fourth day a feast called *Panjiri*, composed of sesame, walnuts, almonds and sugar fried in oil, is prepared and sent round to relatives and friends".

2. SHRAN SUNDAR

On the seventh day after delivery, the mother and the baby are given a hot bath. Special vegetarian/non-vegetarian dishes are prepared on the occasion. Pieces of paper (Burzl) are burnt in an earthen plate and circled thrice round the heads of the mother and the baby to ward off evil. Seven plates of special food are served to the paternal aunts of the baby. This is exclusively women's basket which contains clothes, rotis, sugar, spices, a cask for the new born and its parents and grandparents. This ceremony is called "Shran Sundar".

On the ninth day after the birth (Sundar) the mother and the child are bathed in some auspicious hour and the child receives its name. On that day, too, the child is given clothes (Zafiru), and the midwife throws away the old straw bed and makes a fresh one. After bathing, seven vessels, either of clay or of bronze, are filled with food. These vessels represent seven deities, and as some are flesh-eating deities and some vegetarian, the foods chosen have to be selected with care. Pulse, rice, walnuts and meat are the common selection, and they are worshipped. Seven women of the household must be present to represent the seven deities. After the food has been made holy, the midwife lights a torch of birch-bark and waves it around the heads of mother and child and finally flings it into an earthen bowl with water. She then takes her leave and in rich families is succeeded by a Musalman wet nurse, and the holy food is distributed among relatives and neighbours.

3. KAH NETHAR

On eleventh day an important ceremony is performed. The mother has to drink five products of the cow. The seven vessels are again filled with food and given to friends and relatives. When the Brahman priest has discharged his functions, the astrologer of the father and mother make the child's horoscope (Zatuk). It is called "Kahnether" the ceremony of purification. A small "Hawan" is performed in the house and a "Tilak" is applied on the forehead of the newborn. Thus all impurity is

removed. There are various folk songs in Kashmiri regarding this ceremony.

If the mother's recovery is slow, the deities have to be appeased and the Kāhnethr ceremony is repeated and if the child wails or refuses nourishment, the Sundar rites are again performed. Kashmiri folk poetry has preserved this rite as:

DAHAN DOHN DAH HAEND MARIMAI
KHIMI DOH KURMAI KAHNETHR
GOOTSHAN TE PANDITAN SAAL KAY KORMAI
KORMAI BARKHURDARAI NAAV
MAILE LUKHUI ZATUK SHOKH TE CHAWAI
MAGI KORUI GOOR GOOR SHUK MANZLAY
THANH YALI PEOHAM RANH PEAV KARMAI
KORMAI BABKHURDARAI NAAV

(O, my dear, as soon as you were born, feasts were prepared. Ten rams were slaughtered in ten days. On the eleventh day your "Kashnethr" was performed. Purohits, sadus and scholars were invited. I, your mother, waved you in the cradle. Your father prepared your horoscope (Zatuk). I gave you your name as soon as you were born.)

4. MAS NETHR

When the child is a month old, he receives new clothes and a feast of rice and milk is given to relatives and friends. These new clothes are made by the priest's wife, and she uses not a needle but a thorn of the wild rose. The needle is made by man, the thorn by God, and there was a superstition that the child whose first clothes were made with a thorn will never handle a sword or hurt man or beast.

"Tahar" (rice and pulses cooked in oil) is also prepared and after waving some of it over the head of the child, the "Tahar" is scattered near the house where crows and other birds eat it. Some of the "Tahar" is distributed among neighbours, children and family members. The child receives new clothes. The

ceremony is known as “Masnethr”. All these ceremonies are performed with dedication and devotion. Cleanliness is taken care of at all occasions.

The rite is preserved in this folk song:

MASNETHR SIVMAI KARH TE KHALI
SARISAI SHAHRASS BAGRANH AAI
PRASKEN DEARAN KANVALE GIRMAI
KURMAI BARKHUDARAI NAAV

(I boiled peas and nuts on your “Masnethr” and distributed among all the people of the city. The money received as “Prass” gifts was spent for your earrings. As soon as you were born, you were given a name.)

5. ANN PRAS

On the 12th day of his birth the baby is put on a rangoli laid in the house threshold (porch) and a piece of sweet is touched to his/her lips, the family elders shower blessings on the baby. The baby and mother visit maternal grandparents, where they may stay for a few days. On their return, the grandparents send baked items, mutton preparations, curd, milk and cloths for the baby, his parents and paternal grandparents.

The ceremony of giving first food to the child is called, “An-nPras”. When the child reaches the age of six months, he takes his first taste of rice boiled in milk and his ears are pierced. On this day food is distributed among relatives and friends and various articles are placed before the child such as penboxes, grain and “Khir” (rice boiled in milk). If the child touches the pen box first, it is considered a sign that he will take to writing as profession. The rite is preserved in the following folksong:

BAHIMH DOAH LUKHMAI RANGH MANDOLOUI
AAKAESH NAKASH VEGE LEKHN AAI
BAHIMH DOAH WATI MATAMALAY
KOCHE HEANH DUTHAI AKH JAGIR

(On the twelfth day of your birth, I got prepared your "Rangoli". The "Rangoli" writers came from heaven. On the same day came your maternal relatives and on taking you in to their lap they gave you a "Jagir")

SHIMASIS KURMAI ANPRAPEANAI
MAAN DODAS KURMAI KHIR TAYAR

(At the age of six months I made you to taste "Khir" (rice cooked in milk). I prepared the "Khir" with mounds of milk.)

6. ZAR KASAI

In the third year the ceremony of shaving the child's head (Zar kasai) takes place, this being a very joyous occasion. The day before the ceremony, the boy's hands and feet are coloured red with the dye of "Mehandi" (*Lawsonia inermis*) or of a lichen, and a great feast is prepared by the paternal aunt. The custom of dyeing hands and feet with "Mehandi" is known as "Meanzirat" and is also observed on the occasion of assuming the sacred thread and marriage. The food on this occasion is known as "Wari" and there are three kinds of "Wari". The first consists of rice, the fat of sheep or of goats, ginger, caraway seeds, salt and oil, and is known as "Wari bat". The second is made of turmeric, salt, caraway seed, assafoetida, and pulse and is known as "Masaldar" Wari" and the third, which is known as "Wari" consists of pulse and rice fried in oil. For her service the paternal aunt receives congratulatory gifts (Zang) of rice, salt and cash. All relatives and friends feast heartily on the "Waris". In the case of a girl there is no shaving of the head. The boy's hair is carefully buried under a tree.

The ceremony now is not celebrated with much religious fervor and is not accorded social importance as was done in the past, yet it continues. Some people take their children to holy places like Tulmul or Mattan for shaving their heads.

ZAR KASAYV DEVI AANGAN
GARI KARAYV MEKHLE SANZ
ZARH KASITH DRAAKH OBRAH TAL SIR YOV
GOBUR CHUKH VASDIV RAZAVOI

(I will get your head shaved in Devi Angan and preparations for yagnopavit will be made at home. After shaving your head, you appeared as the sun coming out from behind the clouds. You are the son of Raja Vasudev.)

7. VAHR VOAD

Vahr Voad (birth anniversary) is celebrated on the completion of one year of the child's age. The child receives new clothes and the parents give a good feast to relatives and neighbours. "Khir" or "Tahir" is distributed among children, scattered for birds and some of it is given to family members. The mother receives gifts, especially good clothes, from her parents. There is happiness and hustle and bustle in the house on this occasion. The child's parents worship and pray for the long and prosperous life of their child. Birthdays are celebrated now in a different way. People belonging to elite classes make special arrangements for dance and music at the time of their birthdays. Costly cakes are cut and English songs are sung. They spend a lot of money but the religious fervor has almost disappeared.

8. MEAKHAL

Meakhal (yagnopavit) is the most important ceremony in the life of a Kashmiri Hindu. A boy, who by one or the other reason remains without the sacred thread cannot become a true Brahman. It is a ceremony invested with religious sanctity and is treated as the sign of second or spiritual birth and initiation into Hinduism. In the past this ceremony was performed when the boy would become seven years old and able to wash the sacred thread (Jeniiv, Jonyi) and recite gayatri mantara. Usually all the boys in the family are made to wear the sacred thread together in a single ceremony. This ceremony carries social

importance as well. A series of rites is performed during this ceremony. It is the prime duty of the head of the family to arrange the "Meakhal" ceremony of the boys at the appropriate age i.e after seven years of age but before thirteen years. Some rituals connected with "Makhal" are Devgun and Koshalhum.

9. DEVGUN

For this ritual an auspicious day is fixed by the astrologer. The maternal uncle presents gifts, and the day before the sacred thread is put on, the rites of Devgun are performed by the family priest. Devgun is a ceremony where the protection of sixty four deities called Yognis is invoked. Mother and paternal aunts wear red and white thread (neeryvan) on their ears and a huge "Agni Kund" is prepared where seven purohitis recite vedic mantras for nearly twelve hours and ghee, jaggery, rice and paddy are constantly poured into the "Agni Kund" to please the deities and seek their blessing. For the whole day relatives and friends come to this "Hawan Pandal" and the eldest Meakhal grooms beg of them to give Dakshana (offerings) for the gurus (the Prohits), which the visitors are pleased to give him. This Dakshana is known as "Ebiid". Towards the evening the chanting of mantras rises to the highest pitch and the Meakhale grooms are made to wear the sacred thread – marking their entrance into the pure Brahmanical period, the first stage of Hindu life, when they seek only knowledge and wisdom. After this the Guru (family Prohit) whispers the Gayatri mantra into the ears of the Meakhle grooms. They are directed to recite this mantra every morning after taking a bath. After the sacred thread of three strings is put on the boy, he stands on the mystic figure traced on the ground (wegu) while the women sing around him. He is then carried down to a nearby riverbank to perform his first prayer ceremonies. He is taught the manners and religious traditions regarding worship in a temple. Some rich people take their Makhale groom (grooms) to Asthapan's, like Tulmul and Mattan, instead of a nearby riverbank for performing Devgun.

10. KOSHALHUM

After the completion of "Mas Douad and Poup Chai" and "Smaphi", (along with some other ceremonies) the last important ceremony called "Koshalhuum" is performed. It is performed on the next day of Meakhal. A small "Hawan" is performed and mutton preparations are served to relatives and neighbours. After the "Hawan" is completed, Mekhale grooms are made to put on a new sacred thread and the mothers and aunts remove the neeryvan. This brings to an end the rituals connected with the Yagnopavit (Meakhal) ceremony. All the rituals are accompanied by "Vanvun" the women's folk songs, related to marriage and Meakhal. After the completion of "Meakhal" ceremonies and rituals, a Hindu boy has to live his life like a true Brahman.

There are hundreds of verses of "Vanvun" regarding the various rituals and ceremonies of "Yagnopavit" e.g.,

VASDEV RAZNH DAVLATMANDOV
HUUM KARAY GOLAB BAGANMANZ
HUUMAS NISH AAY BRAHMAN SHARNAY
SHASTARUK SAMVAD LAEGH KARNAY
TREH LAREH GORE SANZH TREH LAREH BABSANZH
SHU LOUR YOUNAY PROVOOTHOV

(O, wealthy son of Raja Vasudev, I will arrange the rite of "Huum" in the rose garden. Brahman have begun recitation of "Shastar" before the "Huum". O, my dear, you got a sacred thread of six strings, three strings from Guruji and three from your father.)

11. YANIVOL

"Bate Yanivol" is a Hindu marriage. Kashmiri Pandits (Bate) perform several rituals during a marriage ceremony. It is an elaborate process spread over many days. The rituals performed during the process have religious and social significance. Some of them are given here:

Garnavai (cleaning of home), Devgun, Lagan, Meenzirath, Vakhidaan, Kanni shraan, Saaz, Kani Daan, Dari Poza, Vuge, Lagnecher, Savagth and Rukhsath etc. "Vanvun", peculiar marriage songs recited by women in a peculiar manner, is one of the distinct features of a Hindu marriage ceremony.

12. GARNAVAI

"Garnavai" is done on both the auspicious occasions of Meakhal and Yanivol, two or three days before the main ceremony. Garnavai" means to give a bath to the house. This important task is started by the paternal aunt. She gets "Zang" (the offerings, gifts) on this occasion, "Wari" is prepared and distributed among neighbours. "Isband" is burnt in "Kangris". As the custom goes, guests are not allowed to be invited before the completion of "Garnava". During this function some women are engaged in cleaning and decorating the house and others with "Vanvun."

SHUKLAM KARITH VANVUN HEUTMAI
SHUB PHAL DEUT YAI MAGI BHAVANAI
SONH SUNDHE TONGREH TE ROUP SANDI BAALAY
SHANKAR ACHAREH VAAJ SHALAY MEATCH
GARA NOVOOTHAY KONGH KOSTOORAH
VASTOOR VANCHAY LACHAJAY

(I started my "Vanvun" with "Shuklam". May Mother Bhavani, bless you. With the golden and silver spades we brought soil from Shankarachar Mountain. You cleaned and adorned your house with "Saffron and fragrance of stag's navel" and brought a broom from Vastoor van, O, bride's mother".

13. DAPUN

"Dapun" literally 'to say' is the process of inviting relatives, neighbours and friends, for attending the Yanivol or Meakhal. It lasts for some days and the women or men who go individually or in a group to invite guests get gifts there, which are called

“Dapvuen”. Women recite “Vanvun” songs related to “Dapun”. This custom has now been overtaken by invitation cards. Sometimes electronic equipments are used for this purpose. This change has brought to an end the religious aspect of “Dapun”.

DAPNAS KITUY RATH MANGNOVMAI
SOOV NECHTAR VUCH NOOVMAYAI
DAPANY DRAIKHAY DACH RAATH TALIIYAI
ACHE DARI YAZMAN BAIEYAI
DAPITH AAIKHAY BAAN DAVAN

(A good time was fixed and a “Raath” was called for purpose of “Dapun”. O, mother of the bride, you proceeded to invite guests beneath the trees of grapes. You received gifts and money as “Dapun”.)

14. MASMUTCHRUN

“Masmutchrun” is to let loose the hair of bride. This custom is observed by only her parents and relatives and it starts her marriage ceremonies. The girl is given a hot bath and adorned. Women recite “Vanvun” and rejoice while music is also played.

KANGNAY CHANAY SONSEND BARIYAI
HARI LEUKHYAI VIVAKAAR
RUM CHEE ZAVILE SOUM SEAZ DRAYAI
SHARIKA AAIYAI VANKPARNAI

(O, our daughter! Your comb has golden teeth, today is your marriage ceremony. Your hair is thick and thin. The line of your hair is quite straight. Sharika came to decorate your hair, braided into separate plaits.)

15. MEENZ-E-RATH

After the custom of “Masmutchrun” is completed, an important ceremony is performed. Heena (Meenz) is applied to the bride and bridegroom. Two nights are fixed for the purpose.

During the first night, the applying of Meenz to bride and bridegroom is called Mallmenz (first heena) or sattalmeen (auspicious heena). This ceremony is performed by the respective aunts and mothers of the bride and the bridegroom. During the second night nears and dears, neighbours and friends attend the ceremony at the girl's and the boy's respective places. A good feast is given to all. All the people rejoice, sing and dance. Women recite "Vanvun". Heena (Meenz) is pasted on the hands and feet of the bride in beautiful designs. In the same way Heena (Meenz) is applied to the bridegroom.

MMAZAY RACHIE SOMBRMAI BACHAI
VAACHI GANG, JAMNA TE SARSOTI
SAMIRE ANDRAY MANZI HIEUND TAR DRAAV
TELE DRAAV YEAL AAV LIEYENAI GAASH
ASE KAUR MANZ-E-RAATH BAANDHUAN KITCHAI
LAKHIMI DICHAI NARAINI

(On the occasion of "Maanziraath", I invited all nears and dears for you. In the meantime, Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati arrived. Maanz bloomed in Samir forest and enlightened us. We arranged the maanziraath for relatives. Narrain blessed us with Lakshmi.)

16. KANISHRAAN

It is the ceremonial bath given to the bride by aunts and sisters-in-law. The groom is also given a thorough bath. Only after this bath they are ready to attend "Devgun" the entrance of Devtas. The boy and the girl wear clothes brought by their respective maternal uncles. The bride wears Dejhur, a golden ornament and Kalpush, a variety of headgear. When the "Kani shraan" is completed, the bride is adorned, perfumes are applied to her face, hair and other body parts. It is called "Saaz Shingaar".

17. DEVGUN

There is a minor difference between the "Devgun" performed for the bride and the bridegroom. Devgun performed for the

bride is longer than that of arranged for bridegroom. After "Kani shraan", the girl is adorned, made to wear bridal clothes and "Dijhur" along with "Atth hur" and other golden ornaments. For the first time she wears a "Doti". The bridegroom is also given the "Devgun". A "hawan" is performed and instead of three strings a sacred thread of six strings is worn by the bridegroom on this occasion. "Devgun" is the religious ritual performed after the bath. The family performs the "Hawan". Devgun is believed to transform the bride and the groom into "Devtas".

18. DARI POOZA

On the wedding day the groom wears a colourful dress. He is made to stand on a beautiful Rangoli (Vegue) in the front compound of the house, where parents, relatives put garlands of flowers and currency notes round his neck. The groom is called "Mahrazeh" (Maharaja) and bride is called "Maharin" (Maharani). Along with a "potmahrazhe" (another boy who is a near relative of the groom) a grand party comprising of relatives, neighbours and friends, the groom moves towards the bride's house in different modes of transport.

Conchshells announce the arrival of the groom at the bride's place. The main entrance there is beautifully decorated. The groom is welcomed with traditional songs. He is put on a Rangoli, where the bride draped in a colourful silk Saree is made to stand beside him on the left side. There is another round of garlanding from the girl's relatives. Then the mother of the girl comes with the Thali containing small lighted lamps made of kneaded rice flour and an assortment of sweets and makes the groom and the bride eat from the same piece of sweet a couple of times. After this the bride is taken back into the house and the groom is made to stand at the main door of the house for a short Dvaar Pooja (prayer on entrance). The groom's party joins the bride's relatives in a rich feast.

19. LAGAN

After dvaarpooja (Daripooza), the bride and the groom are

seated in a beautifully decorated room for a series of rituals and ceremonies amidst chanting of Sanskrit mantras for several hours with little breaks in between. During these ceremonies, the bride is supported by her maternal uncle. The purohits of the two families recite mantras and make the bride, groom and their parents perform a number of rituals with fire (agni) as the witness. The boy and the girl take seven rounds of the agnikund (spring of fire) and vow to live together in prosperity and adversity, in joy as well as in sorrow, till they are parted by the death. Lagan, as this ceremony is called, is followed by "Posh Pooza", showering of flowers in which a red shawl is spread over the bride and groom, held at four edges by four people, and amidst recitation of shalokas. All the elderly people shower flowers on the two "Devatas". After this ceremony the bride and the groom are taken to the kitchen and made to eat from the same plate.

20. RITUALS RELATED TO DEATH AMONG KASHMIRI PANDITS

The body of the deceased person is washed with warm water and wrapped in a piece of new cloth. A little ceremony is performed outside the house. The body is then placed on a plank and carried to the cremating ground by four men. The task is considered to be of great honour and people change places frequently when the followers are many and the journey short on the way to the cremating ground. The funeral pyre is usually lighted by the son of the deceased. The cremation is performed by a Kashmiri Muslim called "Kaavij" against payment in cash as well as in kind. The bones which are not consumed by the fire are, two days later, brought to the home and left in a hole in a wall until the day of Ganga ashtami, when they are taken by the eldest son to a holy lake under the mountain Harmukh and cast in. For ten days the house of the deceased is regarded as unclean and no one takes food from the kitchen of the bereaved. On the tenth day a special ceremony is performed on the riverbank, water is sprinkled and balls of rice are offered. On this day the eldest son has to shave his head and beard. At the end of the

ten days of active mourning the son or the sons of the deceased receive new dresses from his or their father-in-law, which they put on. As they approach the house, the mourners queue themselves in two parallel opposite lines and the eldest son of the deceased enters his house passing through the standing queue of mourners. The mourners then take their leave. Like birth or marriage in a Hindu family, death is also regulated by multiple ceremonies. From the second to the ninth day of the death, the eldest son and daughter of the deceased come out on to the house threshold before sunrise and call upon their departed father/mother a couple of time and recite mourning songs.

21. SHRAAD

“Shraad” (derived from the Sanskrit word Shradha meaning ‘faith, belief and dedication’) is an important and sacred rite performed by Hindus in honour of the souls of the deceased relatives. It is performed at various fixed periods. Shraad is a religious responsibility to be fulfilled without delay. Some rich Hindus spend more money on shraad than they do on marriage. It consists of offerings with water and fire to the gods and manes, and of food and gifts to relatives and to Brahmins. For three months after the death the Shraad service is performed every fifteen days and thereafter monthly for the next nine months. First Shraad is performed on the tenth day by the son/sons of the deceased along with many relatives at the riverbank, where the son/sons shave their heads. On the eleventh day the son /sons and daughter/daughters perform a very elaborate Shraad. Another Shraad is performed on the twelfth day. Shraad is also performed on the first death anniversary and on each subsequent death anniversary. The Shraad performed on every fifteenth day is called “Pachvar” and after every month is known as “Masvar”. The Shraad after six months is Shad Mos”. On the first death anniversary “Vahrvaar”, arrangements are made for a “Tirath Shraad”. This Shraad is performed at an important Tirth like Mattan or Kapalmoochan Shupyan.

FESTIVALS OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

Kashmiri Pandits celebrate a number of festivals of various types with great concentration and dedication throughout the year. Some are purely religious, some are social and others are related to environment. These festivals and holidays are important components of the culture of Kashmir. In some of the festivals of Kashmiri Pandits, Muslims take part as well. Some of the festivals of Kashmiri Pandits are mentioned below:

1. SONTTH

Sonth (or spring) is considered of vital importance both by Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir as it marks the beginning of agricultural work. In the early morning of the day a basket containing unhusked rice, curd, bread, salt, a pen box, flowers and walnuts, is shown to every member of the family by a servant or a boy. Everyone takes one or two walnuts and after bathing the walnuts are thrown into the river. The unhusked rice is given to fishermen, who make a present of fish which is eaten in the evening of the spring day. Early in the morning of the day old broken Kangars (earthen fire pot used for heating during winter), broken earthen utensils and Pulhure (footwear made from grass) are thrown at different places for birds and distributed among children.

2. NOVREH, CHITERNOVM, ZANGTREH

The festival is celebrated on the new moon of the month of Chithar called "Chithar Zoon Pach Okdoh". It is the first Novratra also. Like the festival of sonth, baskets are shown to the members of the family with various things in them, but the chief article of importance in the basket is the almanck. All the members of the family bathe early in the morning and go for an outing to the beautiful places of their choice, wearing

new or clean clothes, especially to Badamwari Srinagar. It is the day on which elders in the family worship and start fasting for Nowdurga. They sow some seeds of barley in the room of worship in a dome in which a lamp is left burning night and day and the seed is watered with milk. On the Chither Novmi, the barley is cut and worn on the headdress for a few days and then flung into the river. Chither Novmi is the birthday of lord Rama and is considered one of the luckiest days in the year. During a fair, on this day of Ramaji, "Havan" is celebrated at Brari-Angan, Anantnag. Chither Ponim is celebrated as the birthday of lord Hanumaan. People worship him on this day. Another festival held on the third day of Novreh, especially connected with ladies, is called Zangtreh. A feast is given and sons-in-law are especially invited.

3. ZEATH AATHAM, HAAR AATHAM, SHRAWANBAA

The eighth day of the waxing moon of the month of Zeath and eighth day of month of Haar, are dedicated to the worship of Khir Bhawani at Tulmul, which are called Haar Zeath Aatham (Zeath Ashtami) Haar Aatham (Haar Ashtami) respectively. A great mela is celebrated at Tulmul on Zeath Aatham. People worship Bughvati and take bath in the sacred spring there. "Havan" is also performed. Devotees come from all corners of Kashmir. Kashmiri Pandits living outside the valley come to participate in this sacred festival. Haaratham is also celebrated with great devotion. Kashmiri Pandits decorate their houses and go to Tulmul again. Thousands of devotees worship and bathe there. One more important festival celebrated in the month of Haar is called "Haar Choudha" (Haar Chaturdashi). It is the fourteenth day of the waxing moon of Haar, special for Jawalamukhi, whose temple is at Khrew (near Pampur). A very important day is celebrated in memory of children. It is called "Sharwan Baa". The twelfth day of the waxing moon of the month of Sawan is the day on which rites are performed for children who died before they received the sacred thread and on this day the bereaved mothers flock to the spring called Kapalmochan at Batpora Shyapiyan to intercede

for their lost ones. Kapalmochan is considered a pious place. After the first death anniversary of a deceased Hindu, a Shraad" is performed in the honour of his soul either at Kapalmochan or Martand, called the "Tirth Shraad".

4. SHRAVAN PUNIM

The famous Amarnath cave situated in South Kashmir is a holy place for Hindus. Devotees of lord Shiva, along with a great number of Sadous, come from all parts of India on a pilgrimage to the cave in the month of Sawan every year for Darshan of Shiv Linga made of ice in the cave. Purn Mashi, the full moon of the month, is the last day for pilgrims to see and worship the Linga in the cave and return. Chari Mubarak (the pious rod of Lord Shiva) is worshipped during the Yatra at various places such as Dhashnami Akhada Srinagar and Matan, etc. Then it is taken to the holy cave and worshipped there. The Linga gradually melts away after the Purn Mashi. It is a long festival and of vital importance. Kashmiris call it "Shra-van Punim" and in the north Indian states, it is called, "Raksha Bandhan". People in Kashmir have now adopted this name also. On this day sisters tie Rakhis on the wrists of their brothers against gifts. Brothers pledge to protect their sisters. The local name of the festival among common villagers of South Kashmir is "Gosien Meleh" (the fair of sadoos). Shravan Punim is a festival of great hustle and bustle with religious and social importance. Kashmiri Musalmans always help the Hindu pilgrims in completion of the yatra, as the journey to Amar Nath cave is difficult and adventurous and the weather mostly very bad. Musalman coolies lift the weak and aged pilgrims on their Palanquius and Dandies on their shoulders. They take hundreds of devotees on their horses. Despite arrangements made by Government the help of local Musalmans is indispensable. Their help continues till date. People who cannot go to Amarnath cave worship the lord Shiva in their homes and temples. Some of them go for a Darshan of Shiv Linga to Thajiwara (Bijbehara) and Shankaracharya temple.

5. ZARM SATAM

Zaram Satam, the eighth day of the waning moon of the month of Bhadoon is the birthday of Lord Krishna. It is called Janam Ashtami also. It is celebrated with religious fervor and devotion. Devotees keep three days' fast and on the eighth day of the month a complete fast is kept. On the day people clean their houses, take bath and worship Lord Krishna. Idol of Lord Krishna is kept in a cradle. The cradle is rocked and "KRISHAN LEELAS" are recited. After the moon shines in the sky rituals are performed.

Janam Ashtami is celebrated all over India. Kashmiri Pandits celebrate it with zeal and dedication. The ceremonial procession, projecting the heroic deeds of Lord Krishna marks the features of the festival. In the recent past processions were conducted at various places in Kashmir with the lead/main procession at Srinagar. At various places, in addition to ceremonial processions, leelas would be staged by "Krishan Leela clubs", about the life and deeds of Lord Krishna. Great number of people, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, used to witness the dramas and Leelas. On the day Hindus adorn their children, on making them put new colourful clothes.

6. DASHHAAR

Dussehra, a grand Indian festival is called "Ram nowmi" also. It is celebrated in honor of the conquest of Lanka by Lord Rama. Kashmiri Pandits call it "Dashhaar". On the tenth day of the waxing moon of the month of Asuj, Kashmiri Pandits celebrate this festival with great religious fervor. They worship Lord Rama and recite devotional songs, called Leela. They wear colourful clothes and go for worship in the temples dedicated to Lord Rama. People assemble in Ramleela grounds. Leelas about the great deeds and the great victory are staged. Big processions are arranged. Effigies of Ravan, Vibeshan, Kumbhakan are burnt.

One more festival, called "Deap mala" (the illumination of the lights of earthen lamps), is celebrated on the last day of the

waxing moon of the month of Kartik. It is the day when Lord Rama returned from "Vanvas" after fourteen years. This festival of lights has a great influence on religious and social life of Hindus. Illumination is done by burning candles and earthen lamps. The illumination is a distinguishing feature of the festival. In Kashmiri folk songs, especially in "Bata Vanvun" the occasion and its religious importance are celebrated in an appealing way.

7. KAWV PUNIM

"Kawv" means crow and "Punim" fifteenth day, the fullmoon. "Kawv Punim", an ancient rite and festival related to crows and remembrance of the dead, is celebrated on the fifteenth day of "Maagh". Maagh is considered a sacred month. Fasting for the full month was observed in not so distant past. Now, fasting is observed on the fifteenth day of the month i.e., the day of the festival. Crows are considered important and sacred in many cultures. Kashmiri Pandits believe that feeding the crows is a work of "Punih" because the crow is also considered the symbol of the soul of a dead person in the Indian traditions. As per Nilmat Purana, "Kawv Punim" is a festival of "Shradhs" (remembrance of dead). Kashmiri Pandits deem the cawing of a crow the harbinger of guests.

On the day of "Kawv Punim" crows are fed cooked rice. Two sticks are kept parallel to each other and paddy grass is worn across those. It is called "Kawn Punim". Cooked rice is kept on the "Kawv Potul". A "Kawv Potul" is prepared for every child of the family. These are kept on the third storey of the house or other particular place and the children call the crows, as in the following folk song:

Kawv Bata Kawvo
Kawv Te Kawin Sait Heath
Gurtay Meache Teuka Karith
Vola Sa Sanay Beah

Khechray Kawvo
Gangbal Shrana Karith
Vozlay Patay Younia Chinith
Varay Bate Khea

(O, crow, Bata crow, you like Kheacher (rice cooked in milk). Come along with your wife, but after bathing in Gangas, with a grey Tuek (Tilak) and red sacred thread. Come and sit on our house and take the Varay Bate).

8. SHISHAR SANKRATH

“Sankrath” means first day of the month. “Shishur” is the coldest portion of “Vandha” (the winter season). It is the period when snow freezes and icicles hang from the roofs of houses, walls and trees. The air is very cold. “Maagh”, a month of winter season, is considered holy by Kashmiri Pandits and is called “Maagh Maas”. On the first day of the month, they perform a ritual in memory of their deceased relatives, ancestors and nears and dears. The ritual is called “Shishar Sankraath”. The grown up Kashmiri Pandits, having donned the sacred thread, worship their ancestors with devotion and dedication. They observe fast and give “Dhaan” (alms) particularly to Guruji” (Brahman). The Dhaan includes Kangr, rice, wool, flour, walnuts, pulses and clothes, etc. In the past winter used to be hard so the people were compelled to remain indoors. In order to keep away all the bad souls, demons, evil spirits and Rakshas, people used to draw a line around their houses with lime or rice flour. The custom of drawing the line resembles the ritual of “Kheche Mavas”.

9. HAERATH

Haerth, the Shivratri, is a phonetic derivation of “Harratri”, meaning the night of Har (Lord Shiva). It is believed that Parvati was wedded to Lord Shiva on this night. Shivratri symbolizes the wedding of the two. It is the most important festival of Kashmiri Pandits. They start preparations for the celebration of this festival with full zeal, zest and dedication. The festival falls on twelfth or thirteenth night of Phagun month. Basically it starts from the first day of the declining moon of Phagun and lasts for fifteen days. During the night Lord Shiva is worshipped and offerings are made till midnight. The of-

ferings in this worship are walnut soaked in earthen utensils. The walnuts are distributed among neighbours, friends and relatives. People wear new clothes and buy utensils to be used for different purposes during the specified night. Next morning starts the day of Salaam. On this day the Muslim neighbours and friends go to the homes of Hindu neighbours for Haerth greetings. There is hustle and bustle in the homes of Kashmiri Pandits. Married women receive presents and gifts from their parents. Some other festivals related to Haerth are "Hure Okdoh" (the first day beginning cleanliness of home), "HURE AATHAM", a very sacred day especially celebrated at Pokhribal. People remain busy in worship in the night. Hustle and bustle is seen on the day in local temples also. Others are Daare Daham, Gadekah, Wager Baha etc. There is great influence of Haerth on the culture of Kashmir as it is a social and religious festival. Kashmiris, including Pandits, Musalmans and Sikhs, believe that Haerth never comes without rain. There are various Kashmiri folk songs about the festival.

10. TELA AATHAM

On the eighth day of the waxing moon of the month of Phagun, all the rituals related to "Haerth" (Shivratri) culminate. According to tradition distribution of offerings of "Haerth" is prohibited on and after this day. On this very day a festival called, "Tela Aatham" is celebrated with zeal and dedication. Eight earthen lamps, each with two wicks, are kept burning at a particular place in the house, on the wisps. Late in the evening these lamps are kept burning at eight places outside the house. On this festival worship is performed in the honour of ancestors, nears and dears who have died before the day of the festival, and ancestors are remembered. "Dhaan" is given to the poor and rice to Guruji (Brahman). It is said that the demons, who were freed on the day of "Kechhe Mavas" are again restricted and retrained to move freely. "Tela Aatham" is an ancient festival. It is said that there was a festival "Mahi ma", celebrated in ancient times, on the same day of the month of

Phagun. On this day, late in the evening burning earthen lamps were kept on snow.

11. VYATH TRUVAH

Vyath truvah is an ancient festival celebrated to commemorate the mythological birthday of the main river of Kashmir. Vyath is known by other names such as Jehlum, Bihut, etc. According to Nilmatpurana, after the water of Satisar was drained off and the demon was killed, scarcity of water became a grave problem. Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva was told by the Lord to take the form of a water course. Parvati did so and Lord Shiva pitched his trident in the ground at Verinag and there sprang vitasta. It is said that it was the thirteenth day of the Bhadoon, the fifth month of the Hindu calendar. Since then the festival is being celebrated every year on the same day. As per Hindu belief "VITASTA" is a sacred river. It is the backbone of Kashmir. Its birthday is celebrated with great religious fervor by Kashmiri Pandits. They used to worship Vitasta, the incarnation of Lord Shiva on the day and threw flowers into it. The tradition was to decorate the banks of the river by lighting earthen lamps and set them afloat on flowing water of Vitasta. This illumination was a fantastic feature of the festival. Sultan Zainulabidin made it an annual feature during his regime. The illumination was made on the roofs of houses and boats. But this sort of illumination has become a thing of the past. However, Kashmiri Pandits celebrate the festival by performing rituals. The festival was celebrated by all sects of society irrespective of religion, caste and community in the past. On the day a ritual is performed at "Vethe Vothur", a place not very far from Verinag, having seven small springs. A "Havan" is performed there and Hindus from distant places gather there.

12. KHICHI MAVAS

Khichi mavas or Khechri Mavas is an old Kashmiri festival, celebrated on the fifteenth day of the moon's waning in the month of Poh. Khechir (mixed rice and pulses) is prepared on

the occasion with dedication. It is the occasion for the propitiation of evil spirits, who are conciliated by offerings like "Kheacher". After offerings, king of Pisacas is worshipped. Houses and utensils are cleaned. After worship some Khecher is kept on paddy grass outside the house, with a chilly and a piece of a radish on it for Pisacas and Yakshas. The remaining Khecher is distributed among all the members of the family. Children make merry. As per the legend during winter evil spirits and demons are allowed to roam freely in the valley. The festival is also mentioned in Nilmatpurana. Nila, the king of Nagas, had made the festival compulsory for the people forever. The festivals are in vogue in one form or the other in Kashmiri Pandits.

13. KAMBAR PACH

Kambar Pach is a period of fifteen days in the waning moon of the month of Asuj. Kashmiri Pandits perform rites for the dead during these fifteen days. Harvest season begins in this month because it is the time when paddy, maize, pulses and fruits are ripe. It is the month of "Shraadh". It is mentioned in Nilmatpurana as "Shradh Paksh". In case anyone is unable to perform "Shradh" for any reason during the first twelve days it is compulsory for him to perform it on the thirteenth day. The fourteenth day is fixed for the "Shradh" of those who have been killed by weapon. On the eve of the "Shradh" fresh rice made from the new paddy is kept in the name of the dead. However, one who cannot perform the "Shradh" necessarily has to give rice, fruits and clothes as "Dhaan" (alms) in the name of the dead to Guruji. Fasting is necessary on the day of Shradh".



RITUALS AND CEREMONIES OF KASHMIRI MUSLIMS

1. BIRTH

Some month's before confinement a Muslim lady goes to her father's house and when the day of childbirth arrives, "Warin" (midwife) is called. Nowadays, childbirth mostly happens in hospital. After the child is born, a priest or any other person recites "Azaan" in his/her right ear. The mother is not given solid food for two days. In the past she was kept on a straw bed, called "Huur" in the house and now this practice is not in vogue. On the third day, which is called "Turoi" the mother is given some solid food like bread, eggs or cooked rice with dried vegetables, cooked with care. The news of the delivery is sent to the newborn's father and a party of women, nears and dears come for "Mubarak" (congratulations) carrying gifts, spices, etc. for the mother and the newborn. They are welcomed and given a good feast. If it is the first delivery of the mother and the newborn is a boy, all family members feel highly delighted. Many customs have undergone a change and some have been given up. In the past girls of the family and neighbourhood used to manifest happiness on the birth of a baby by dancing and singing. This practice is not in vogue now.

2. SUNDER

"Sunder" was celebrated on the eleventh day in the past, but now this ceremony is performed on the seventh day after the birth of a child. The mother is given a bath and the child gets a name. The name is given either by a family Pir or the eldest member of the family. On the day a special meal is served to the family members, near relatives and close neighbours. The mother of the baby is given warm bath with water with some herbal medicines added to it. In the past straw bed was thrown out on the day and nowadays the bed is changed. The room

in which the mother is kept is cleaned. Clothes of the mother are changed and the child gets new clothes as well. During first two days of fasting the mother takes only infusion of certain herbs. Taking this infusion continues for seven days although after three days the mother takes solid food as well. "Sunder" ceremony is an occasion of rejoicing. Gifts are given to "Warrin" (midwife) in case the delivery was made at the home.

3. PEAW

"Peaw" means offerings and gifts which are sent to the new mother and the newborn after twenty days or a month by the in-laws of the woman. A day is fixed with consultation of the father of the new mother. On that day a party comprising more than three persons (the persons male or female, can be up to thirty in certain cases) come to the mother and child, having new clothes, pulses, sugar, Bakirkanis or Kulchas (bread), dry fruits, money, ornaments (rice, in some cases) and many other things as delivery gifts. A special "Wazwaan" is prepared for the guests by the father of the new mother. A special cradle for the baby is given to the new mother. The in-laws of the woman spent a lot of time and money in collecting the articles for inclusion in Peaw depending upon their financial position. It is a day of full hustle and bustle for both the families. In the past "Wanvun" songs were recited by the women of both the families celebrating "Peaw" on the day at their respective places.

4. CHATGEHHIM

In case of Muslim women, period of Seclusion lasts for forty days. "Chatgehhim" means the fortieth day after the delivery. On this day the new mother is given a hot bath. As she has now recovered, her "Huur" and straw bed is thrown away. After the bath she lives with other family members as a normal member. Herbal medicines are mixed with the water prepared for her bath. The lady avoids performing religious rituals during the forty days. After the "Chatghhm" she is considered pu-

rified and a good feast is given to the relatives of her husband and family members.

5. ZARKASAI

The first hair cut of child is known as "Zarkasai". This ceremony is performed after a child attains the age of six months. Some people perform it only after two or three months and others wait for four or five months. A barber is called and the neighbours and relatives are invited. While the barber cuts the hair of the child, girls rejoice, sing and dance. Women recite "Vanvun" related to "Zarkasai". The hair is collected and a walnut is sowed in the earth. It is called "Zardoon" and the tree sprouts from it are called "Zar dooni Kul". Now this practice is not in vogue. The women and children present at the ceremony are given "Qahva" and "Bakirkhanis". The barber gets gifts and money. The baby is given a bath and new clothes. Though the "Zarkasai" is still in continuance yet it has lost the old charm. Some of the ceremonies have been discontinued. During the haircut and after the bath, women offer the "Gulemeuth" (literally, kissing of the child's hand i.e., giving him gifts and cash. Some people conduct the ceremony at the shrines of Hazrat Sheikh Noordin Wali, Baba Reshi, Zanu din Reshi or other Sufi saints.

Some verses from "Vanvun" regarding Zarkasai":

ZARH KASAYOV ZAINSHAH SABANIH
AADH KASAYOV GHARIH PANNAY
BISMILLAH KARITH ZARH KASAYOV
ISMAY AZAM PARAYOV

(O, dear, we will make your first hair cut at the shrine of Zain Shah Sahib and second one at the home. We start your Zarkasai with the name of Allah and recite the "Ismi-Azam").

6. KHATANHAL

It is a religious duty of all the Muslims males to undertake the

“Khatanhal” or circumcision. It is also called “Khutna”. It is performed at three to five years of child’s age. In the past the child was made “Sonuat Maharaze”. He was given a mehandi dye on his hands and feet and was made to put on new clothes. Like a groom, the “Sonuat Maharaz” or “Khatanhaj mahraz” was taken to a local shrine on a decorated horse, where the Pir or Moulvi performed the “Fateh” ceremony for the departed family members. People on the way used to greet the groom. During the night the child was placed on a basket, under which a rooster was cooped, the recompense for barber who performed the circumcision (Khutna). Women recited “Vanvun” songs related to the occasion when the groom was taken to local shrine. However, at the time of “Khutna” the child was given sugar and eggs to eat. The barber used to apply some herbal medicines. A “Wazwan” was arranged for relatives, neighbours and friends. Before this ceremony, a Khatme-Sharif” was conducted. It is a rite, where some Moulvis and Head Pir, recite Quranic Ayaat, Naat and pray for the success of the “Khutna” of the child. All friends and relatives kiss the child’s hand and give him money. Nowadays circumcision is done by trained surgeons in hospitals and at times in homes. Some verses from “Vanvun” on circumcision are:

YEE CHOU FURMOOVMUT NABIYAN SANI
 YEHA! VATH CHAY MUSALMANIYAI
 PHOTIS TAL KOKUR TEY TRAMI MANZ THOOLA
 RANGH BULBULA BEHNAVOAN
 SUNACH MAHRAZOV GARYOU ROUNAY
 GINDYOU CHRARACHI BONAY TAL

(It is the way of Islam shown by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH.)
 We kept a rooster under the basket and eggs on “Traaem” (the round plate)

Our colourful bulbul is to be circumcised.

O, my, “Sunte Maharaza”, I will get small round bells made for you and play with at Chrare-Shareef under the shade of grand Chinar.

7. KHANDAR

“Khandar” means marriage. Tradition of early marriage was common among Kashmiri Muslims, particularly peasants, in the past. Now this practice has come to an end. The rituals and customs performed by Kashmiri Muslims during process of marriage are less in number than those by Kashmiri Hindus. The marriage was an occasion of rejoicing for all the villagers living in one habitat, village or Mohalla. All the people used to take part in the process of the marriage of a boy or girl and do collective efforts for success of the ceremonies. Everyone used to take part in the “Jeshan of Khandar” with affection and dedication. Now, the marriage of boys and girls is arranged only when they reach the age of puberty. Their consent is given due acceptance by parents in this connection. In the past the ceremonies used to start a month before the marriage. The process had different customs with different names in vogue in different places. Many customs have been dropped with the passage of time. Some of the customs and rituals in vogue are such as Gandun, Nishain, Haziri, Baed Doah, Boag, SaathNamah, Nikah, Manziraath etc.

8. GANDUN

“Manzimyor” (go - between) plays a great role in finding a suitable match for a girl or a boy. “Manzim-yor” is contacted for the purpose by the father, relative etc. of the boy or girl, when both of them have attained the age of marriage. The first custom is “Garvochai” or “Pialas Travun”. The boy’s father accompanied by close relatives and “Manzim-yor” visits the house of the girl where they are served tea. Some people serve them tea and Mutton preparations. The party is very small, only two or five persons. After some days the father of the boy makes arrangement of one more custom, called “Thap Traven”. It is common in urban areas. Some women come to the house of the girl on a fixed day with gifts, ornaments and clothes for her. They are given a good feast and honour. All of them give the girl some cash. She is made to wear the clothes

and ornaments and thus it is announced that the girl has been accepted by the relatives as a match of the boy. They thank the parents of the girl for acceptance of request already made by "Manzim-yor".

9. NISHAIN

After some time, a day is fixed by "Manzim-yor" or by the families for "Nishain". "Nishain" is a ceremony performed for strengthening of the new relation and happiness of the future couple. On the day a lot of gifts, a variety of ornaments, dry fruits, sweets, perfumes and clothes, is sent to bride. A party of the boy's relatives, goes to the house of the girl with all the above mentioned gifts. At times there are more than twenty persons in the party. They are given a warm welcome. They are served Qahva and variety of bread like Kulchas, Bakirkhani, etc. and "Wazwan". A great hustle and bustle is seen in both the houses. In the past women used to recite "Vanvun" songs on the occasion. Now it is a thing of past. After "Wazwan" is served the guests return to their homes. In return the girl's father sends "Nishaan" to the boy's home after some days.

10. HAZIRI

Before the "Nishaan" is sent from father of the girl, a small custom is observed in the home of the boy, by the relatives of the girl. It is in immediate response to "Nishaan" received from the father of the boy. The girl's father sends "Haziri" to the boy's father. On the occasion one or two persons go to the home of boy from the girl's home, with gifts and some ornaments for the boy. Usually dry fruits, sweets and now "Ladoos", etc. are sent in "Majmas" (big circular trays made of copper or silver). The guests are given a warm welcome and served a good feast. Guests introduce themselves to the boy, talk to him and make him wear a wedding ring. It is done to increase affiliation and affection. After the guests leave, the dry fruits, bread, etc. brought by the guests are distributed among neighbours and relatives. Same is done on the occasion of "Nishaan".

11. BAED DOAH

“Baed Doah” means religious festivals. During the period intervening “Nishaan” and the “Yaniwoal”, the father or family members of the boy visits the girl’s home occasionally. If during the interval any of the chief religious festivals occur – ID Ramzan, ID Qurban, Miraj Sharif and Urs Nabi (PBUH), the father or guardian of the boy sends presents to the girl and the girl’s father or her guardian also sends presents for the boy. It is done at the time of local festivals also. In case the interval period has winter season, “Kangri” and Vande Poshaak” (winter clothes) are necessarily included in the presents. At the time of the first snowfall both the families send “Harise Deag” to each other. “Manzim-yor” is the carrier for these give and take occasions. The day of wedding is fixed and “Saat namh” is written.

12. BOAG

In the rural areas there was a custom called “Boag” (literally, a part). The custom was for the boy’s father to give a good amount of money or any special gift to the girl before marriage. To fix the amount or quantity of “Boag” was a common cause of debate between the two parties. The father of the girl used to demand more “Boag” either in cash or kind. The father of the boy resisted and the quarrels used to begun. A day was fixed for “Boag”. The boy’s father was invited on the day in the company of three or four relatives with “Boag” to the girl’s home. In the “Boag” new clothes and some ornaments were included for the girl. After taking tea, the amount and quantity of “Boag” was decided. Then the guests were served a good feast. It was necessary to make the payment on the spot. “Boag” as already mentioned, was a part of something kept for the bride and the groom. So the gifts sent to one another on the occasion of chief religious festivals, were called “Iez Boag” (gifts sent on Idd), etc. The custom of “Boag” as was in vogue in the past in rural areas, has ended now. But the sending of “Boag” on religious festivals is still in vogue.

13. SAAT NAMH

In order to fix the date for "Yanivoal" a small function is celebrated at the girl's house. After negotiations and interventions of "Manzim-yor" the day is fixed. A small party from the boy's side visits the girl's house. They are given a warm welcome and served properly. After eating dishes of "Wazwan" the senior members of both the parties discuss about the date of "Yanivoal" (the actual marriage). "Boag" is fixed and paid to the girl's father before this day in the past, but now it is not in vogue. Everything regarding the ornaments, cash, clothes, etc. is discussed and finalized amicably. All this is paid on the spot, or deferred to the time of "Nikah". Day, date, number of guests to accompany the bridegroom and time of the "Yanivoal" is fixed and a document called "Saatnameh" is prepared and signed by all concerned. On this occasion the guests from boy's side give some presents to the girl. Some people give her cash also. After the "Saat nameh" is finalized, guests leave for their homes and arrangements for "Yanivoal" begin.

14. DAPUN

"Dapun" (literally to say) is the process of giving invitation to relatives, friends and neighbours. In the past it was a grand ceremony. After fixing the day of marriage the process of "Dapun" was started. In many cases "DapunVaiel" (the persons deputed for giving invitation) went to invite people on foot. Women were deputed in groups (five to ten or fifteen in a group) to invite close relatives. It was a tradition that the group while entering in the village or Mohalla, started "Vanvun". The "Vanvun" songs were recited till the women reached their destination. There they were welcomed and served a good feast, called "Dapven Bate" (the feast served on "Dapun"). The invitation was given and in return some cash received, as "Dapvean". The only difference between the groups of men and women was that men never recited "Vanvun" songs. Now process of "Dapun" has been overtaken by invitation cards.

15. NIKAH

"Nikah" is the most important religious function. No Islamic marriage is valid without "Nikah". There are hard and fast rules for "Nikah". It is not only a "marriage document" but a religious binding also. Ceremony of "Nikah and Ejab – u – Qabool" is performed always before the wedding. In some cases the ceremony takes place days or months before the wedding. If the ceremony takes place before some months, a day is fixed for the purpose. A party of guests come to the house of bride with presents and cash, already fixed on the day of "Saatnam-eh". "Moulvi" (Priest) is invited by the bride's father. Guests and senior members and relatives assemble in a hall and the function starts with the Quranic recitals connected with marriage. Moulvi recites "Khutbah Nikah" (lecture about Nikah) and explains it. He explains the importance of marriage, rights and duties of wife and husband. When the bridegroom is not personally present, he is represented by three of his close relatives and the bride also is represented by three close relatives. All these representatives are called "Shahid". One of them is "Vakeel" and the two are "Shahid Vakeel". It is a religious binding on them to ask the bride and the bridegroom their consent about the "Nikah". "Vakeel" of bride, may be her uncle, brother, asks her and the two "Shahid Vakeel" remain present as witness. Same is done in case of bridegroom by his "Vakeel" and "Shahid Vakeels". This type of "Nikah" is called "Vakalatan" and if the bride and the bridegroom are personally present in the "Nikah Majlis" directly they are asked their consent. This type of "Nikah" is called "Asalatan". "Ejab – Qabool" (consent, acceptance and readiness) is necessarily obtained from bride and bridegroom according to Islamic law. In the "Nikah Majlis", "Mehar" is decided. There are two ways of paying "Mehar" by the groom to the bride. Its importance has been emphasized strictly in Islam. One way is "Mehrer Moajal" meaning to pay the "Mehar" on the spot and other is "Mehre gair Moajal" i.e., to pay later on. "Mehre Moajal" is preferable. Under Islamic law no marriage is permissible without the pay-

ment of "Mehtar" before "Yanivoal". A groom who has not paid the "Mehtar" is not allowed to touch his bride. After the rituals are completed "Moulvi" prepares "Nikahnameh" (marriage document) in duplicate giving full details about the bride, bridegroom, witnesses, attorneys, clothes and ornaments and "Mehtar" agreed upon by the two parties. One copy of the "Nikah Nameh" is handed over to the father of bride and other to the father of bridegroom. On the day women recite "Varvun" songs related to "Nikah". After "Nikah" sugar balls and sweets or dates are distributed among the people present there and among the relatives of the couple. A good "Wazwan" is served to guests. The "Waza" (cook) makes several rounds appearing each time with a new dish, which he serves on copper plates called "traem".

16. MANZIRAATH

Some fifteen days before the marriage, festivals and functions are held in the houses of both the boy and the girl. Purchase of "Wardan" (the wedding clothes), garments, gifts, jewellery and other things is arranged by both the parties. Cutting of wood for Wazwan, sewing of clothes and other various works are done. The day before the marriage, the father of the bridegroom sends Mehandi to the bride's house. On the penultimate day of marriage, a ceremony known as "Malwaaz" is performed, in which the women and girls living in the neighbourhood are invited and served Qahwa. The hands and feet of the bride are dyed in Hena (Mehandi) late in the night while the women keep on reciting "Varvun" songs and dance. For a week before the marriage, the bride sits in henna with her hair open and down. The practice is called *Malas behan*¹. This period is also marked by singing and beating of "Tumbakhtari" every evening. The night after "Malwaaz" "Manziraath" is performed with zeal and zest, joy and happiness. The hands and feet of bride are dyed in hena (Mehandi), by her friends and sisters. Nowadays some families hire professionals for this purpose. This ceremony is attended by relatives and neigh-

bours. Women recite "Vanvun". "Isband" (incense) is burned in Kangri. Hands and feet of groom are also dyed with Hena (Meanz) at his home also. Both the parties celebrate "Meanziraath" at their respective places. Girls dance and sing. This is the night of rejoicing and feasting. In the past dyeing of hands and feet of groom was performed by a barber.

17. MASMUCHRUN

"Masmuchrun" means to let loose the bride's hair. Before "Menzraat" a small function is conducted by parents and relatives of bride for this purpose. Some women from the groom's family also attend this function. They bring with themselves some combs, perfumes, etc and start loosening of the hair of bride while reciting emotional "Vanvun" songs. Then the hair is combed and perfume is applied to it. Sugar balls, sweets and walnuts are showered over the bride. "Isband" is burnt in a "Kangri". Girls dance and sing. All are served Qahva. In certain cases guests from the groom's side are served a feast also. During daytime a small function is conducted at the groom's home. He is given a haircut and his beard is trimmed. Women assemble and a barber is called and the function is conducted. Sweets and walnuts are showered over the groom. Women recite "Vanvun" and girls dance, sing and play. Nowadays the groom goes to a parlour and "Naied" is not called for the purpose.

18. ZAIEL VAANKEH

The glossy black hair is a precious thing of beauty for Kashmiri women. In the past the hair was drawn to the back of the head and braided into a number of separate plaits. The plaits were gathered and tied together and their terminations were mixed and worked up with coarse woolen thread into a long thick pigtail like plait, to the extremity of which, for ornamentation, a long black tassel of thread was suspended. This unique way of maintaining the hairstyle was called "Vankeh Valneh", the plaits being the "Vaankeh". The long

plaits of hair reaching ankles, were gathered into a bunch and a "Vaankpan" was tied to the bunch. "Vaankpan" was like a fillet, made of wool, cotton or silver or silk. In case the plaits were made of thin strings of hair and woven across, having the smallest gapes, the style was called "Zaiel Vaankeh". Only experienced ladies could do this minute work. In the past, brides were adorned by the same hairstyle. The ceremonies of "Mas-muchravun" and "Voad Valien or Vaankeh Valneh" were performed carefully before the wedding day. The famous Kashmiri poet, Rasul Mir praises the "Zaiel Vaankeh" in this couplet:

ZAIEL VAANKEH BAL YELI LAAGI SHUMAR
PATCH LAGNASS GANZARANASS LATCH TAIE HAZAR
AMI SHAI NO MUKLAN PAIAE LO LO

(When my beloved will start counting the numerous plaits of her hair, it will take her many fortnights to count them. What an endless task!).

19. SRAWUN

Before the wedding day bride and the groom are given a hot bath with herbal medicines at their respective places. The bride was given this bath by aunts, sisters-in law. Nowadays the bath is given to the bride by her close friends or relatives. In the past the groom was given this bath by the village barber (Naied). After the bath was completed, the barber was given some cash and all the clothes of the groom. The bride and the groom were made to wear "Vardan" the clothes for marriage. During this ceremony singing, rejoicing and reciting of "Vanvun" songs continued and after the bath "Isband" was burnt in a colourful "Kangri" and the "Kangri" was kept in front of the bride and the groom. It is said the burning "Isband" keeps away evil spirits and the evil eyes. Guests, children, ladies and girls sit around the bride, sing and dance. They are served "Qahwa" with "Kulchas".

20. SAAZ

The term "Saaz" means beautification and adornment of bride and groom. Some nears and dears make the bride wear "Vardan". It is arranged by the groom's father and consists of clothes, headgear, footwear, ornaments, and perfumes, etc. In the past hot debates and quarrels occurred, while examining the "Vardan" by bride, her friends and brothers, between the concerned parties. In the past a trained lady was called for "Saaz" of the bride. She was called "Saaz Guar" (a lady who adorns the bride). Nowadays female adorning from a beauty parlour is called for the purpose. In some cases young friends of the bride adorn her. The process continues for hours, amidst the "Vanvun" songs and dance by women and girls. The adornment of groom was deemed responsibility of a barber in the past. He is not called now for the purpose. "Isband" is burnt in "Kangr" in front of bride and groom.

21. YANIVOAL

On the day of marriage, after the bridegroom was adorned, he used to go to the local shrine and his family graveyard for "Fateh Khawni". It was an occasion of hustle and bustle and great rejoicing as men, women and children followed the horse on which the bridegroom was taken to the shrine. One or two persons used to hold the reins of horse. Sisters walked on both sides of the horse burning Isband in beautiful "Kangr" made at Chare Shareef. Women recited "Vanvun" songs walking behind the groom. After prayers at shrine, the bridegroom visited the nearest relatives in the village or mohalla. He was served "Kande Sharbat". All this process is called "Phirnavun". The groom sits amidst relatives and guests, who offer him money and presents called "Gule meuth". Sugar balls and dry fruits are showered on the bridegroom. At the fixed time, usually after evening, the groom proceeds to bride's home, accompanied by a number of guests, called "Sallaer" (the people invited for a feast). The number of these guests is as decided already at the time of "Saatnameh". The process is called "Yanivoal". A soon

as the groom reaches he is given a warm welcome. He goes to a local shrine and in the guidance of "Moulvi" the "Fateha" is performed. Women recite "Vanvun" songs and some shower sugar balls and dry fruits over him. "Isband" in "Kangr" is burnt on the both sides of the groom. The courtyard and the main gate are decorated. Women, children and girls are in colourful dresses. The bride is amidst her relatives, women, girls and children in a deep thinking as she has to leave the home of her father and mother and to live with strangers in the home of her husband. A palanquin is sent in advance by the groom's father. Nowadays the horse and the palanquin are not used. There are sources of modern transport available. After visiting a neighbouring shrine, the guests and the groom are seated in a decorated room. The groom sits on "Plang". "Qahwa" is served to guests. Women and men, all nearest relatives of the bride, enter the room one by one and distribute sugar balls, sweets and dry fruits, properly and beautifully packed in beautiful bags or plastic containers, among the guests. This process continues amidst the recitation of "Vanvun" songs by women, assembled in the courtyard. Isband is kept burning in beautiful decorated "Kangr" and "Isband Danih". Some people arrange beautifully decorated big tents for accomdating the guests. If the "Nikah" rituals have been performed already, then the guests are served a grand "Wazwan". To serve the "Wazwan" is called "Saal-Sab", The service is rendered carefully, "Saal" is served in "Tramies" the beautiful round copper plates. Four persons eat from one "Trami". Water for hand wash is served with "Tash Naari" and "Dastarkhan" is spread. The "Waza" (cook) makes several rounds appearing each time with a new dish, which he serves on "Tramies". After the "Saal" is completed the "Rukhsati" is announced. In case the "Nikah" rituals are to be performed on the spot, then the "Saal" is served quickly after the rituals are completed.

22. RUKHSAT

Preparation for the departure of bride is completed. She is

carried by her brother or maternal uncle to her palanquin. The bride's eyes are wet at the time of departure. Her maternal relatives cannot help weeping. Mother, aunt, Mosi and other relatives weep and other women recite tragic "Vanvun" songs related to departure of the daughter. The bride is accompanied by one or two women or girls as "Doude Mouj". The bride's female relatives escort her for some distance singing songs of farewell. The palanquin is not in use now. The bride is carried to occupy her seat in a car or taxi close to the groom. The departure of the daughter is an emotional occasion as is depicted in these "Vanvun" songs:

KOOR YALE NAERAN VANIG PHERAN
GOBRE MOUAL NEARAN GUR TE GOUND HAETH

(My heart sinks when daughter proceeds to her husband's house. Father of groom proceeds to his home with pride and dignity, having taken the bride for his son, the best gift.)

KORE HENZ MOUJ GAI MARBAL AABAS
KOOR GAI AFTABAS SAET

(Mother of the bride went to fetch water from "Marbal" stream and the bride accompanied her groom,)

KORE HENZ MOJAE CHOUE KATHE PHERAN
KOOR HAI AAKHAR LOOLHUEND MAAL

(O, mother of the bride, do not be sad. Daughter is at last the property of her in-laws.)

23. MAHRANI ISTAKBALL

In the past, when the marriage party used to pass through a village all the women would come out and insist on seeing the bride. On reaching to the bridegroom's house, the bride was lifted out and carried into a chamber set apart for her. She would sit with downcast head until her mother-in-law came and raised her face. The bride would give some money or an

ornament as "Hashe Kaant" to her mother-in-law. The tradition continues in one or the other way. Nowadays, the bride remains also sitting in a kneeling posture until her mother-in-law takes off her "Burqa". The women present on the occasion make offerings in cash to the bride. On the occasion women welcome the bride by singing "Vanvun" songs of welcome and by burning Isband in "Kangre". Girls sing and dance. The bridegroom is not allowed to enter the home until he pays "Zam Braanth" to his sisters. It is a custom, according which sisters of the groom demand for some presents in kind or cash. Sheep, goat or a cock is slaughtered on the arrival of bride, called "Raat Chaph".

24. VATHAL

"Vathal" is called "Valeema". It is a feast served to the relatives and neighbours, on the day following "Yanivoal". This feast has been allowed as per religious instructions. The sheep or goat, slaughtered on the arrival of the bride the previous night, is cooked in addition to other sheep and goats necessarily. A few close relatives of bride also attend this feast.

25. GAR PEATH ANUN

"GAR PEATH ANUN" literally means to bring groom home. Under the system bride was not sent to her husband's home, instead, it was the husband who had to come and settle down in his wife's home. This was a social institution of marriage in rural Kashmir which remained in vogue for many reasons. It is called the institution of "Khanadamadi". It was very common in the 18th and 19th centuries. Sir Walter Lawrence writes: "The Musلمان's, if possible, marry their daughters to some near relation, and if this is not possible, they ask some man to their own tribe, who has more sons than money, for a boy, whom they take into their house as Khana Damad (Gar Peath). The Kashmiri peasants have lately lowered the age at which their daughters are married, and it is not uncommon for a girl to be married at the age of seven. When a man's daughter is

three years old and he cannot arrange for her marriage with a near relative, he will take a boy into his house as Khana Damad (Gar Peath) and this boy until he marries the daughter of the house, has to work like a drudge. The system of Khanadamadi is said to have become common in Sikh rule, and if forced labour (beggar) was wanted for transport, the unfortunate "Khanadamadi" (Gar Peath) was always sent. If he came back alive, he won his bride. If he died, it did not matter as the son of the house at any rate, escaped. At present custom of Khanadamadi is not popular. The system of Khanadamadi has died now. Boys do not like to go as "Khanadamad". Only rare examples can be seen now. In case a father gives his son to a person, who has no male child, as Khanadamad, the boy receives there love and respect, otherwise he is not bound to stay there. He brings his wife to his father's home. There are a number of poems and ballads ridiculing the system of Khana Damad and relating the agonies and problems of the Khana Damad of the past, in the folk poetry of Kashmiri language, called "Gar Peath Nameh". The common saying "Gare Peathuk Zamtur ghou Bar Peathuk Hooan" (a son-in-law who lives always in his in-law's house, is like a dog at the door) relates the condition of the life of a "Gar Zamtur" (Gar Peathuk Zamtur). The girl for whom a boy is brought as "Khane Damaad" is called "Dukhter Khana Nisheen".

26. DEATH CEREMONIES

The death of any member in a Muslim family in Kashmir is mourned with wailing and loud weeping. The male members hardly express their sadness in words as the tragic event is attributed to God's will. Male members generally maintain a dignified silence. Muslims of Kashmir perform ceremonies on the death of a family member in line with the Quranic spirit and the "Sunah". The body is washed with luke warm water and is wrapped in a white cloth known as Kafan. It is then put in a wooden box known as "Tabut" and is carried either to the mosque or a nearby spot, usually Jinazagah, where the

special prayer, known as “Nimaze Jinaza” is read under the leadership of a local Imam, or any other member of the family well versed in the Quranic text. After the burial the mourners come back and a simple tea prepared by the close neighbours is served. No meal is prepared in the bereaved family for three days. During the three days relatives and neighbours manage their meals. On the fourth day known as “Tsuraium” special prayer meeting is conducted at the graveyard, where Quranic verses are rendered for the peace of the deceased soul. On this day, in rural Kashmir, the bereaved family arranges a social get-together and the people present are fed with a variety of local dishes. In Srinagar and adjacent areas, instead of “Tsurium” Muslims, generally organize a function of socioreligious nature after Friday prayers. Muslims under the leadership of local Moulvi offer special prayers known as “Jumma Fatah”. On their return to home of the grieved family, people gathered are served tea with special Kashmiri bread. On the fourteenth day a semi religious sitting under the supervision of local Imam is held, which is known as “Khatm-e-sharief”. People present recite Quranic verses for peace of the soul of the deceased.



FESTIVALS OF KASHMIRI MUSLIMS

1. SHABI QADAR

“Ramzan” is the ninth month of Hijri calander. It is a pious and important month in which, in addition to routine prayers, a special prayer called “Nimaz-e-Taraveh” is performed. During this month of purification of soul and body, continuous fasting is observed by Muslims. It is called “Mahe Siyam” and Ramzanul Mubarak.

In accordance with the injunctions of Islam, Muslims in the valley observe “Shab-i-Qadar” on the 26th night of the month of “Ramzan”. Muslim men spend their whole night in the local mosques offering “taraveh” and reciting the Quran and other religious texts. Muslim women also offer special prayers and recite festive songs in praise of “Ramzan”.

After completion of full month fasting, during “Ramzan” “Idul fiter” is celebrated.

Women recite “rov” songs during the month of “ramzan” particularly on the occasion of “Shab-i-Qadar, Shab-i-iBaraat and Shab-i-Meraaj” such as:

Shabi Qadar Teay Shabi Meraj
Logay Nabi Saban Taaj

Away Aalmas Gaash
Away Aalmas Gaash

(The world is enlightened by Shab-i-Qadar and Shab-i- Meraj:
Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is crowned by Almighty Allah
and world is enlightened)

2. SHABI BARAT

Shabi Barat is observed during fourteenth night of “Shabaan” (8th month of Hijri Calender). Men flock to local mosques and offer prayers for the full night. Some men and women offer the prayers in their homes. All the men and women recite Quran

and hope for good. This is the night of blessings. At midnight men visit the graves of their ancestors to offer "Fateh" for the peace of their souls in the eternal world. Homes are decorated by illuminating earthen lamps. Nowadays people illuminate their houses by electric lamps and candles also. Some women recite "Vanvun" and "Rov" songs till late in the night of "Shabi Barat". Some people observe fast on the following day. People prepare special food on the occasion.

3. IDI – MILADU – NABI (PBUH)

Idi – Miladu – Nabi, called the "Vors- i – Nabi" is a major religious festival celebrated with immense ceremonial fervor by Kashmiri Muslims on the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H) i.e., the twelfth day of "Rabi-ul-Awal", the third month of the Islamic calendar. Prestigious religious congregations are held at the shrines, where the sacred "Moue-I-muqadass" (the sacred hair of Prophet Mohammad P.B.U.H) is housed. "Dargah Hazratbal" is the most prestigious among those shrines as the devotees numbering in lakhs assemble there for the "Deedar" of the sacred hair. Exhibition of the sacred hair at the shrines where it is housed before the devotees after the five "Nimazeh" (prayers) a day is the chief feature of the occasion. People flock to the shrines, especially to Dargah Hazratbal, with the hope to be blessed by the sight of the sacred relic. The exhibition of the sacred hair is made at Jenab Sahab Soura, Khiram Sirhama, Pinjoora Shopian and Kabamarg Breng, etc. This holy practice continues on other religious festivals such as the birthday of four "khulfa" of the Prophet (SAW). People conduct special prayers on the festival, called "mowlood-e-shareef". Precautions are taken in conducting this "Khatme shareef" seriously. Mosques and shrines are decorated. Special processions are taken out in all the cities, towns and big villages with great dedication and devotion. Roads are cleaned and "Deavdis" are put up on all the roads. People in the processions chant "Naaras" (slogans) in very high tune such as – Idi-Miladu Nabi (P.B.U.H)-Mubarak Baad.

Sarkar ki Aamad-Mubarak hai
Naira-i-e-Resalat-Ya Rasool Allah (P.B.U.H)

Special lecture sessions are arranged in various mosques regarding the sacred life and contributions of Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H). In the past thousands of devotees from all parts of the valley used to bring with them the flages of renowned saints.

4. LOKET IDD

“Iddul Fiter” is called “Loket Idd” in Kashmir. “Idd” is the day of happiness. “Loket Idd” comes, after completion of “Ramzan” (the month of fasting). It is the first day of “Shawal” (the tenth month of the Islamic calendar). “Nimaze Idd” is the special feature of this festival.. People flock to local “Idd Gaha” for offering this “Nimaz”. Loket Idd is celebrated with religious devotion and fervour. People clean their houses, put on new clothes and arrange for good meals. Some well off Muslims prepare “Wazwaan” on the occasion. On the next day daughters along with their husbands and children are invited by fathers. Children are given “Ideyana” (the idd gifts – cash or kind), they frisk and play. Girls sing and recite “Rov” songs and women recite “Vanvun” songs related to blessings of Ramzan and Idd. It is obligatory for all Muslims to pay “Sadqe Fiter” (the alms named as Fiter) to the poor and needy before. The last day of “Ramzan” is called “Arafa”. It is regarded as a sacred day as well. Women recite “Rov” songs on the occasion such as:

Idd Aie Rase Rase

Idgah Vasvay Idgah Vasvay

Yemi Ande Nabi Saaib

Tami Ande Vasvay Tami Ande Vasvay

(Slowly and slowly Idd came to us. Let us go to “Idd Gah” for offering “Idd Prayers”; we will go from the side our beloved Prophet (P.B.U.H) would give us blessings)

5. BAED IDD

“Idd-ul-Azha” or “Idd-I-Kurban” is called “Baed Idd” in Kashmir. It is celebrated on the tenth day of “Zilhaj” (the twelfth month of the Hijri calander) in memory of the sacrifice offered by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) when he gladly took his son Ismail to sacrifice him in the name of God. The day and occasion is celebrated by Muslims with dedication and devotion.

Muslims, who are in a position to afford an animal for “Kurban”, are bound to slaughter an animal such as camel, ox, sheep, goat, etc. and distribute the meat among relatives, neighbours and the needy. “Baed Idd” is celebrated for three days. On the tenth day of “Zilhaj” men flock to local “Idd Gahas” for special “Idd Nimaz”. Children frolick and play. Girls play “Hikat” (dance and sing “Rov” songs. Women also recite “Vanvun” songs and “Rov” songs. Children get “Idiyana” (Idd gifts - cash or kind). A special feast is prepared in every home. Daughters along with their husbands and children are invited by fathers and served “Wazwan”. They are given gifts also.

The tenth day of “Zilhaj” is the day of performing “Haj”. Muslims from all parts of the world assemble and perform “Tawaf” of “Kaba” in Mecca. “Haj” is obligatory to all those Muslims who can afford the expences of the pilgrimage.

6. VORUS

“Vorus” is Kashmiri version of “Urs”, the Arabic word meaning “Majli-si Fateh” (offering special prayer and reciting Quran for consolation and “Magfirat” of souls of the dead nears and dears and of all Muslims. However, in Kashmir it is used for a typical festival held annually at the shrines of Muslim saints, Sufis and Rishis on their death anniversaries. “Verse is the plural of “VORSE”. “Vorus” is celebrated in different villages, towns and the city of Srinagar and is an integral part of Kashmiri culture. Every “Vourus” has a religious, social and cultural importance. On the day of the vorse of a saint, people gather around his shrine to pay special prayers and homage. Devotees

feel consolation and satisfaction on "Ziyarat". Articles associated with the saint are displayed for the people. This process/practice is called "Ziyarat" and "Dedaar". Not only Muslims but Hindus and Sikhs also join the gatherings of devotees. After prayers and Ziyarat people buy "Tubruk" (pious gifts for their nears and dears) from the market, established temporarily on the day of "Vorus". At some shrines "Vorus" lasts for three to five days. During the Vorus, at some shrines "Zool" (illumination) is put up. Bandhe Jashan and Dhamael is also performed at some shrines. At many places "Vorus" is of local nature but there are some very famous throughout valley such as Urs of Hazrat Batmoal Sahib Srinagar, Urs of Hazrat Pir Dastgeer at Srinagar, Urs – I Nabi (P.B.U.H), Urs of Hazrat Sheikh Noordin Reshi at Char-e-shareef, Urs of Baba Zainuddin Reshi at Aushmuqum, called Frov, Urs of Hazrat Reshmol at Anantnag, Urs of Hazrat Shah Hamdan and Urs of Hazrat Makhdoom Sahab.

All the "Vorse" are popular despite the rigours of weather. Devotees offer "Nazru-Niyaz" at the shrines. At various shrines "Niaaz" is not offered only in cash but in kind also, like goat, sheep, ox, cow, buffalo, etc. People offer "Tahar" and at some shrines singing and drama is also a feature of the Urs.

7. SHAH-I-HAMDAN SABUN VORUS

Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (R.a), popularly known as Amir-i-Kabeer, Shahi-i-Hamdan and Ali Sani, was one of the most remarkable personalities of Muslim world in the fourteenth century. He was a celebrated scholar, great writer, mystic poet and spiritual guide. Hazrat Shah-i-Hamdan visited Kashmir three times and preached Islam. Kashmiri's consider him "Bani-e-Musalmani" (founder of Islam) in Kashmir. His "Krammat" (miracles) are famous. He is loved by all Muslims. He wrote more than one hundred books, but "Zakheerat-ul-Malook", Chihal Asrar" and Avrad-e-Fatah" are the most popular in Kashmir. "Avrad-e-Fatah" is a collection of "Wazaif" which is recited loudly in chorus in mosques of Kashmir in the

morning after "Nimaz-e-Fajar" (the Nimaz before daybreak). To avoid evil spirits and calamities, arrangements are made to recite it collectively by some "Moulvis" invited.

The place where Hazrat Shah Hamdan (R.A) stayed in Srinagar during his visit, is situated between Zaina Kadal and Fateh Kadal on the right bank of river Jehlum. It is called Khan-kahi-e-Moula". Some other Khanqahs (places where the saint preached/stayed) are at Tral, Vachi, Zainpora, Pampore, which are related to Hazrat Shah Hamdan (R.A). Kashmiris celebrate "Shah Hamdan Sabun Vorus" (the Urs of Hazrat Shah Hamdan) every year on the sixth day of Zilhaj (the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar) with devotion, dedication, religious fervour. People from all areas of Kashmir rush to Srinagar for Ziarat. Various relics are exhibited on the day. Devotees are seen engaged in reciting Avrad-e-Fatah, Zikr-u-Azkaar and Naat-o-Manqabat. On that very day "Vorus" is celebrated at "Khankahi-Faz Panah Tral, Pampore, Vachi and Zainpora. Imams, Moulvies and other Islamic scholars highlight the works, deeds, scholarship and spiritual powers of Hazrat Shah Hamdan in mosques and open places before big gatherings of people. At the time of "Vors-e-Shah Hamdan" big congregations are conducted at least in all big mosques of Kashmir. All the devotees of Hazrat Shah Hamdan, living in the vicinity of Shah Hamdan mosque and Khanqa-e-Shah Hamdan, especially who were Khadims, Mujavirs, Charagees, etc. of the Khanqah, were called, "Khanqaesh". As a tradition the relics housed in several shrines in Kashmir are exhibited at particular times. Same is the case with the relics housed in Shah Hamdan mosque. But there was a tradition, that every year a great procession was taken from Khankah-e-Moula" to Tsrar-e-Shareef. Thousands of people used to join the procession from all over the valley. The relics from Khankah were carried in the procession to the shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Noor-u-din Reshi at Tsrar shareef. There all the people used to pray collectively and call for blessings. This process was called "Khankaesh Vors". After 1953 it was stopped.

8. SHEIKH-UL-ALAM SUND VORUS

Hazrat Sheikh Noor-u-din Reshi, the founder and originator of Islamic Reshi cult in Kashmir and the patron saint of all the Rishis, is known by various names as Alamdar-e-Kashmir (the flag bearer of Kashmir), Sheikh-ul-alam (Sheikh of the whole world), and "Nund Reish". He was born in Kaimoh village of district Kulgam in fourteenth century. His ancestors belonged to Kashtwar. His father got converted to Islam under guidance of renowned saint Syed Hussain Simnani (R.A). Sheikh-ul-Aalam influenced Kashmiri culture to a great extent. He was a great poet. He proved a torch bearer in darkness for Kashmiris. Sheikh-ul-Aalam meditated for twelve years and preached Islam during his visit to most of the villages and towns of the valley. He had a number of disciples, both men and women, the most venerated were Hazrat Baba Bamudin Bumzooch, Hazrat Baba Zainudin Aushmuqam, Hazrat Baba Payaamudin and Hazrat Baba Nasrudin (R.A), those are called "Khaleefah". His shrine is situated southwest of Srinagar at Chrare Shareef. A grand Vorus is celebrated to commemorate the great saint at Chrare Shareef on the twenty sixth day of the month of Poh of Kashmiri calendar i.e. the eighteenth day of October every year. Devotees from all areas of the valley flock to Chrare Shareef, to observe the "Shab" (i.e., they offer prayers, recite Manqabat, Naat and conduct "Khat-mi-Shareef", pray for blessings and redressal of calamities and problems). "Shab-e-Chare Shareef" and "Chrarch Braswar" (Thursday at Chrare Shareef) are famous and regarded pious. There are a number of relics, which are exhibited during "Vorus". Apart from "Vorus" devotees rush to Chrare Shareef every day especially on Thursday. However, the "Vorus" has a great importance for Kashmiris. People from all religions visit the shrine and pray for blessings with great faith, dedication and reverence. A number of shrines spread all over the valley are thought to be the shrines of Hazrat Sheikh-ul-Aalam. These shrines are situated at all those places where the great saint spent some time in mediation or in preaching reshi

teachings. Concomitant with the “Vorus at Chrar-Shareef”, “Vorus” is observed at all those shrines as well.

9. DASTGEER SABUN VORUS

Hazrat Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani (R.A), is commonly known as “Kaha Noov” (one who has eleven names) and Pir Dastgeer (spiritual guide, who holds hand of devotee, helper). Hazrat Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani was a great Islamic scholar, great spiritual personality, writer and mystic poet. He is the founder of the Qadiri order of Islamic Tasawuf. Devotees invoke his help in every difficulty and conduct “Dasgeer Sabun Khatm-i-Shareef” (Khatm-i-Shareef of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani), when disastrous circumstances take place. He never visited Kashmir, but his devotees, including Muslims and Hindus, have faith in him. His Khanqaha is situated at Khanyar, Srinagar, where his sacred hair is housed. People go to the Khankah, pray for blessings and “Ziyarat” of relics. Unfortunately, the old Khankah was gutted in a fire in 2012 but relics were not harmed. A new Khankah resembling the old one has been constructed at the site.

“Vorus” of “Hazrat Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani is celebrated every year on the eleventh day of Rabi-ul-Sani (the fourth month of the Islamic calendar) with religious fervor and reverence at Khanyar and all over the valley. People gather for the “Dedaar” of relics exhibited on the day. They offer special prayers, recite Manqabat and Naat, conduct “Khatm-i-Shareef” and pay “Nazru Niyaz”. Devotees of Hazrat Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir prepare tea and serve to neighbours and others as “Khiraat” (alms) on the eleventh day of every Hijri month, the tea is called “Kahim-Chaai”.

10. MUKHDOOM SABUN VORUS

Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Kashmiri (R.A), a great saint, was born at Tujar Shareef, Kamraz in 900 Hijri (1494 A.D) and after completion of Islamic education and attaining a high spiritual status, he became a great spiritual torch bearer, educator and

“Makhdoom” of Kashmiris. He spent his life in mediation, offering prayers and educating people about “Shariah” and Sunnah”. He had numberless disciples all over valley. After he was sent to Srinagar for acquiring higher education, he never went back to Tujar Shareef. He passed away at Srinagar on the twenty fourth day of Safrul Mazafar, 984 Hijri, and was laid to rest on “Kohi-Maraan” near Hari Parbat fort. Beneath his ” Ziarat Gah” is Darashkoh mosque, Makhdoom Mandow and Dara Mahal. This “Ziyarat Gah” is one of the six shrines called “Shash Buqa” of Srinagar. People flock to the shrine every day for “Ziyarat” and pray for blessings.

A grand “Vorus” is celebrated on the twenty-seventh day Sufrul Muzafar (the second month of the Islamic calendar) every year at the shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (R.A). People perform special prayers, conduct “Khatm-i-Makhdoom”, recite “Manqabat”, Naat and religious verses. Devotees recite the “Quran”. Thousands of people are seen engaged in buying and selling of eatables. The “Vorus” at the shrine is continuously performed on all Thursdays and Mondays, however, the biggest gathering is seen at the time of the annual “Vorse”. Hazrat Makhdoom Sahib is also known as “Sultan-ul-Arfeen” (the king of celebrated Arifs, the saints, who have real access to God) and “Mahboob-ul-Aalam” (dear to all). At the time of this “Vorus” congregations are conducted at other places in Kashmir, particularly the places visited by Hazrat Makhdoom Sahab and his disciples. By and large the ”Vorse“ is celebrated by all Kashmiris. Devotees recite the following Persian couplets.

<i>Sultan Mara Khuram Kunad</i>	<i>Sultan Mara Bagam Kunad</i>
<i>Sultan bidanad Hal-i-Ma</i>	<i>Sultan Bar Aarad Kari Ma</i>

(Sultan-ul-Aarifeen will make us happy. He will redress our sorrows. He knows our condition. He will get our work done.)

11. THE FROV

Frov is a festival of lights and bonifires, celebrated every year

in the month of Waheq, according to Kashur calendar at the shrine of Hazrat Baba Zainudin Reshi, an eminent disciple of Hazrat Sheikh Noor ud din Reshi. The shrine is on the hills of Aushmuqam, some 75 miles from Srinagar. It is said that Hazrat Baba Zainudin Reshi mediated for a long time in the cave there and killed a demon who had created havoc in the area. On the death anniversary of Hazrat Baba Zainudin Reshi a festival is celebrated at the shrine from twelfth to sixteenth. In the past it was celebrated for ten days. People from Maraz i.e., south Kashmir take part in the processions in great numbers. The festival has religious and cultural significance. People offer prayers, recite Quran, hymns, etc. Bhands perform Bandh-e-Jashan and Damael. One of the significant components of the "Frov" celebrations is the "Zool". Zool is to burn Laish-e-Dreade (the chips of pine wood arranged and tightly secured round a willow stick). People assemble near the shrine with Laishi-dreade in hand and burn them at an open place near the shrine on the thirteenth night of Waheq. People of the nearby villages who are not able to attend Frov, assemble in their villages with paddy grass in their hands and burn the grass at the same time the Zool is illuminated at the shrine of Zainudin Reshi. After the Frov is over, Bhands go to other villages for celebration of festivals at the local shrines as the series of festivals starts in the adjacent villages, one after another. Frov is celebrated at same time in Aushmuqam and Gophbal (Srigufwara). It is said that Hazrat Baba Zainudin Reshi spent some time in prayers in the cave of Gophbal also. Aushmuqam is the Hermuqam and Gophbal the Bonmuqam. During Frov, women perform traditional Rov dance and Vanvun as a mark of their devotion.

Dr. Gulshan Majeed, a noted expert on folklore and history, has noted that "Frov is the derivation of Frovar, an Avestan term for soul and has nothing common with the Sanskrit word "Prad or Prado", as the compilers of Kashmiri dictionary want us to believe. The Avestan word Frovar is rooted in the term Farvardin, meaning honouring the dead. The Frov is celebrat-

ed as the festival of lights and bonfires. The term is laden with pronounced cultural statement and is significant for the study of relations between Zoroastrian Iran and Kashmir. It may with other relevant material at our disposal, help us locate remnants of actual Zoroastrian presence in Kashmir”.

12. VEGBEIR MAELE

A two-week long fair is celebrated every year in the month of “Haar” of Kashmiri calendar (June) at Bijbehara, a famous historical town, 49 kilometers from Srinagar. There are many shrines in the town but the shrine of Hazrat Baba Naseeb-u-din Gazi (R.A) situated in the heart of the town near the historical Jamia Masjid, is the most famous and important. The Vegbeir Maele (fair at Bijbehara) commemorates the death anniversary of the sixteenth century saint Hazrat Baba Naseeb-u-dib Gazi (R.A) (1589-1637 A.D.). Baba spent his life for welfare of mankind. He preached Islam across Kashmir. He got built mosques, bridges and toilets. He wrote many books on theology including Noor Nama, about the celebrated Reshi Sheikh Noor-u-din, in Persian language. The shrine becomes a cynosure of attraction for the devotees hailing from far and near during the festival. The whole town wears a festive look and immense hustle and bustle is witnessed all around. The influence of the festival spreads well up to the historic Dara-Shah Garden, popularly known as Padshahi Bagh, located at the distance of about two kilometers from the shrine. Two main striking features of the fair are traditional “Rov” performed by women and the traditional “Dhamael” (the traditional Dhamaali dance performed by Bhands, called “Dhamale Maeit). The edibles bought by devotees are called “Tabruk”. Men, women and children are seen chatting and shopping in the fair. One more aspect of the fair was “Rout Maele” (night festival). As the tradition goes, an important feature of “Vejbeir Maele” was the “Maele Mahraza” (groom of fair). The roots of this custom are in the relations of Rishi’s of Kashmir, especially in the family of the leader and founder of Islamic Reshi cult

Hazrat Sheikh Noorudin Reshi. On the fourteenth day of the fair, a handsome young man was adorned like a groom at the grave of "Sidreh Moaj" (mother of Hazrat Sheikh-ul-Aalam) at Kaimoh, Kulgam. The groom, called, "Maele Mahrazh" was made to ride a horse. He was taken to the shrine of Hazrat Baba Naseeb-u-din Gazi (R.A) at Bijbehara. (a distance of near about 12 miles, in a grand procession. The "Maele Mahraza" was greeted in all the villages. At every place people used to join the procession. Women used to greet the groom with "Vanvun" songs and men recited slogans such as "Naari-e-Takbeer – Allah Hu Akbar" etc. As soon as the groom reached Bijbehara, thousands of devotees used to greet him. The tradition is no longer practiced now.

13. RESHMAILE SABUN VORUS

The shrine of the celebrated saint Hazrat Baba Hardi Reshi (908-986 Hijri) commonly known as "Resh Moel" (Reshi, the father) is situated in Anantnag. He was a great Reshi and social reformer. A saint of high spiritual status, Resh Moel performed many miracles which are still famous. He worked hard and helped the poor and needy. "Langar" an "open kitchen for all" was always kept ready near his shrine. It is said that he used to grow paddy in his own land and give it in charity. He is said to have tasted meat only once, on the instruction of his "Murshid" (spiritual guide), Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom Kashmiri. He was "Saiemul-Dahar" (observer of continuous fasting) and never missed "Nimaz" as recorded by his contemporary Hazrat Baba Dawood Khaki (who was Chief Qazi of Kashmir in the Chak period). A fair is celebrated on the death anniversary of Hazrat Baba Hardi Reshi, from twenty-seventh of the month of "Shawaal" (the tenth month) to second of the month of "Ziqad" (the eleventh month), with devotion and dedication at his shrine. Out of respect for "Reshmoal" his devotees all over Marraz, particularly Anantnag and its nearby villages, abstain from eating meat during the days of "Vorus". People do not visit the shrine after consuming meat

or any intoxicant. The "Vorus" is celebrated with pomp and show. Devotees recite "Avrade-Fatah" and conduct "Khatm-e-Shareef in addition to routine prayers. Devotees are seen engaged in "Zikar". People offer "Tahar" (rice cooked in oil) and pay "Niaaz" and get "Tabruk" (sacred gift). "Mouge Kaile" (a dish made of radish) is prepared on the occasion in almost every family in Anantnag and surrounding areas.

14. ASHURH

The tenth day of the month of "Muharram" (the first month of Hijri calendar) is known as Ashur". It was the day on which Hazrat Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) sacrificed his life, along with the lives of his family, nears and dears, for the cause of Islam, in the desert of "Kar-bala". Shia community all over the world mourn on the day the great martyrs of Karbala. This day is observed with great devotion by Shia Muslims of Kashmir and mourning processions are the main feature. Mourning continues for one month. "Jalos-e-Zuljinah" (Procession of Zuljinah) is main feature of this event. "Marsiya Khani" (recitation of mourning poems), "Majlis-e-Mattam" (gatherings for mourning) and "Majalise-Waaz" are other main features. All the Muslims of Kashmir, Shias and Sunnis, observe the month of "Muharram" as the month of mourning. Sunni Muslims prepare "Doade Vogreh" (Kheer-rice cooked with milk) in the name of the children martyred in the desert of "Karbala", and distribute it among neighbouring children and passers by for the first ten days of the month of "Muharram".

15. KHAIRAAT

Helping the poor and needy, is a religious obligation for all the Muslims who are in a financial position to afford it. There are various ways of charity in practice. Usually alms are given to beggars and the poor either in cash or kind. Tahar (rice cooked with oil or ghee), Kalhare Bate, Kandoore, Sasrass and Nazru-Niyaz are different types of alms. Main aim of all these types

of alms is to keep off the evils and misfortune.

When a family member is in acute trouble, like a serious ailment or an accident or any other calamity, a sheep is sacrificed and its meat is distributed among neighbours and passersby. This practice of alms is called, "Kath Thape Thape Karun" (to distribute the meat of sheep). "Tahar" is the most easy and most common type of alms. Rice cooked with a dish of turmeric is distributed among children and the people nearby. People take these alms as Tabruk (sacred gift). Sasras is distributed in the open, on the roads or in the courtyard of a mosque. Rice, meat and vegetables are cooked together in big vessels and distributed. In the same way "Pir Khairaat" is conducted. In the courtyard of a shrine or in the courtyard of a mosque, rice and daal is cooked together and distributed among people. "Sasras" and "Pir Khairaat" are distributed to ward off natural calamities such as continuous rainfall, flood, drought, famine, ailments, etc.

16. ZIARAT/DEEDAAR

There are a number of relics, housed in the shrines of Syeeds, Rishis and other Sufi saints. Relics are the belongings preserved after the death of a person. The relics of Syeeds, Rishis and Sufi saints are called "Tabrukaat". They are exhibited for devotees because they deem looking at the relics a source of blessings. It is called, "Ziarat or Deedaar" (to see a relic), the shrines are also called "Ziyarats". Usually the relics include Khirqa (cloak), Dastaar (Turban) Aasa-i-Shareef (cane), alam (tent pole), Moe-i-Mubarak (sacred hair), Khrav (wooden patten), Hateh-e-Pealeh (wooden cup), etc. These are displayed at the time of the "Vorus" and during natural disasters to ward off evil. Thousands of people gather at the shrines and wait anxiously for "Ziarat/Deedaar". There are "Moi-e-Mubarak" (sacred hair) preserved at Dargah Hazratbal Srinagar, Jenab Sahab Soura Srinagar, Khiram Sirhama Anantnag, Kabamargh Anantnag and Pinjoora Shopian – all attributed to Prophet Mohammad P.B.U.H. People recite Manqabat, Naat and pray

for blessings and alleviation of their agonies at the sight of relics. On the "Deedaar" of "Moi-e-Mubarak" they recite aloud "Darood-e-Shareef", weep and pray for blessings in congregations.

17. DEASH GANDEIN

"Deash" means a sacred thread or a piece of cloth and "Gandein" is to tie. When people are not successful in achieving of their goals, they feel the need to seek the help of Sufi saints and Pirs and Fakirs. For example, a childless couple, a patient, a poor person is always in search of help and support. Such a person goes to tie or attach a piece of cloth, ribbon, string of thread to the windows, doors, walls, iron gates, etc, at a shrine with the firm faith of good results. They vow at the shrine that if their wish were fulfilled they would sacrifice a sheep, or bring a present for the shrine. If the wish is fulfilled, the devotee accompanied by other family members and neighbours pays a special visit to the shrine. He fulfills his promise and opens the "Deash". It is called, "Deash Mutchrawien". A childless couple, if bestowed with a male child, visit the shrine to perform the first haircut of the child and untie "Deash".

18. KHATM-I-SHAREEF

In order to invoke blessings of God, Kashmiri Muslims conduct a religious ceremony called, "Khatm-i-Shareef". Khatm-i-Shareef is performed in houses as well as in mosques or at the shrines of Sayeeds and Sufi saints. It is performed to keep natural calamities, disease, accidents, troubles, etc. away and at times with the purpose of making offerings for the dead. Kashmiri Muslims also perform "Khatm-i-Shareef" before beginning of an important work and birth of a boy. Some "Moulvies" under the leadership of "Imam" of local mosque or a family Pir, are invited. They sit in a circle and recite hymns, selected Quranic verses and portions of religious poetry and the usual prayers. They recite Naat, Manqabat and Sufi treatise. Khatm-i-Shareef is of different types such as Khatm-i-Nabi (P.B.U.H), Khatm-i-Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani, Khatm-i-Amir-i-Kabeer

and Khatm-i-Sheikhul Aalam, etc. "Khatm-Khawans" (those who take part in Khatm-i-Shareef) are served with a grand feast and are paid cash, called "Hadyea". Sometimes people conduct recitation of Awrad-i-fatah" in their homes, for the purpose of safety and security of the family members, and to wave off the evil spirits, agony etc.

19. NAFAL

Special prayer gatherings are arranged by Kashmiri Muslims when devastating natural calamities occur and they take the calamities as the result of their sins and bad deeds. Following calamities like fire, plague, famine, earthquake, flood and drought, people organize gatherings and processions and present themselves at local shrines. There they confess their sins, pray for redressal of calamities and agonies. In case the catastrophes are huge, people organize large processions, carrying with them the "Tabrukaat" from local shrines to Khanqah-i-Moula Srinagar, Tsrari Shareef, Iddgah, Srinagar, Ziarat Pir Makhdoom Sahab, Ziarat Syed Hussain Simnani Kulgam and other Ziarats. There they pray and beg pardon. Walter Lawrence writes, "Musalmans from all parts of valley flock to Chrar Shareef, and when scarcity is imminent, where calamities such as earthquake, cholera and drought occur, thousands gather together, there and sit silent on the hills around, confessing their sins and begging for pardon. The impressive ceremony is known as "Nafal".

20. NAZRU-NIYAZ

"Nazru-Niyaz" are common rites in Kashmir. Pirs advise their devotees, disciples, to maintain "Nazar" and "Niyaaz" for redressal of their problems.

In the words of Dr. Farooq Fayaz:

"Nazru-Niyaaz" constitutes one of the major elements of saint worship, not only in Kashmir but in other parts of the world as well. "Nazar" as commonly practiced is a self-imposed practice that a person makes with the supernatural. The supplicant, for

example, a barren woman, pledges to offer something valuable, if her wish is granted. Her gift to the shrine is conditioned on the ground that if her wish is not granted, she has no obligation to fulfill her "Nazar". In other words it is an exercise whereby hope is linked with action. Contrary to this "Niyaz" is not determined by any self-imposed condition but depends upon the goodwill of the supplicant. It may either be follow up action or a welcome gesture to foresee the successful culmination of the proposed desire or wish". Cash or kind offered to a shrine is commonly called "Niyaz" as well. A common practice of slaughtering a sheep, ram or goat and preparing a "Wazwan" of its meat, at one's home, and inviting neighbours and relatives on the occasion, is called "Niyaz". Some Moulvi, Pirs are invited to conduct a "Khatm-e-Shareef" on the occasion. "Nazar" includes the practice of "Desh Gandine" as well.

21. KANDORE

"Kandore" is included in "Nazru-Niyaz". It is a "Nazar" as well as a "Niyaz". A barren lady, on the advice of her Pir, promises to perform seven, eleven or twelve time "Kandore" as "Khiraat", if she is bestowed with a baby. In case her wish is fulfilled, she does as promised. A "Khatm-e-Shareef" is performed and the Pirs and Moulvis, recite Quranic "Aayat" and pray for blessings. They are given a vegetarian feast. Cooked rice, daal, cheese and various vegetables are prepared. A peculiar feature of the "Kandore" is that it is performed during night. "Tabruk" is sent to neighbours after daybreak, particularly to barren ladies, who consider it very holy. "Kandore" is performed yearly till the "Nazar" is completed. Tabruk is distributed in earthen utensils. In the past, "Kandore Bate" and vegetables were prepared and cooked in various earthen pots. To conduct "Kandore" is not easy as special care has to be taken for completion at every step. Pirs and Moulvis are honoured and given cash and the vegetables as gift. "Kandore" is performed for the purpose of being able to have a baby. This ceremony is related to barren ladies only.

22. ROHAN POSH

“Rohan” means “for departed souls” and “Posh” means “flowers”. The term “Rohan Posh” refers to a ceremony performed in memory of the dead by Kashmiri Muslims. It is celebrated in the month of “Vayukh”.

Kashmiris remember their dead, visit graves and distribute specially baked loaves of rice known locally as “Rohan Posh”. This custom of distributing ceremonial bread among villagers on a particular occasion has a close resemblance with the tradition of preparing ceremonial breads for distribution among Parsis.

Not only are the ceremonial breads distributed but varieties of flower are showered on the grave and water is sprayed along with the flowers. At various places the bread distributed is called “Poshe choche”. Special prayers are offered at the grave under the leadership of local “Moulvi”. A number of breads are sent to the home of the “Moulvi”. Showering of flowers and spraying of water on graves resembles that of the customs of Kashmiri Hindus who give water to the dead daily. The tradition of “Rohan Posh” is now forgotten.

23. KASAM

“Kasam Karun” is to take an oath or give a promise. It is to swear before man and God, spiritual personalities, etc. Kashmiris take oaths and give promises frequently in their day-to-day life. They believe that to break an oath brings bad omen. Kashmiris believe that Almighty Allah is present everywhere and at all time. They say “Khudai Senz Drai”, (to swear by God) and “Dasgeers thee” (to swear by the saint and so on) etc. Oath is an old age custom. In the distant past, illiterate Kashmiris used to take oaths on all important occasions like agreements, buying and selling of holdings. At the time of fixing marriage of their wards, they used to take oath a custom called, “Kasam Drai”. When disputes used to take place for want of written proof the disputing parties would rush to a local shrine and one party would take an oath to prove their claim true. People

were afraid of taking false oaths at the shrines. Some shrines were famous in this respect as one who took a false oath there was said to be liable for immediate severe punishment.

Sir Walter Lawrence writes:

“They believe in the sanctity of oaths taken in certain places and there are certain trees of ordeal where a lying witness is sure to be taken over with blindness”.

24. TAVEEZ TE FATILEH

There is an old age custom, still alive in Kashmir, particularly in rural areas, called “Taveez Gandun”. Taveez is a thing worn as charm against evil and supposed to bring good luck. People have faith in the Pirs, Moulvis, Fakirs, etc. First of all, they obtain Taveez for a newborn baby, to protect him from evil spirits and “Nazr-e-Baed”. The Taveez is either tied to his cap, or worn round the throat or tied on an arm. “Raech” is another kind of “Taveez”. In the past villagers used to obtain “Taveez” or “Raech” even for their tame animals. “Taveez” are different in respect of shape, size and content. “Taveez Pir” (Pir Sahab who gives Taveez) of Kashmiri Muslims give “Taveez” of two kinds. One kind is that a Pir Sahab writes some Quranic “Aayat” or names of Allah on a piece of paper and the other kind is that a piece of paper on which some geometrical shapes are drawn, particularly square and the piece of paper is covered with a piece of cloth or wrapped in metal. Sometimes the piece of paper is folded as per advice of Pir Sahab, it is kept in a cup of water and the stained water is drunk by the suppliant. This is called “Fateleh”. In addition to writing “Taveez” and “Fateleh” on pieces of paper, they were also written on pieces of birch bark. Some Pirs advise to burn the Fateleh in Kangri near the nose of a person who is overtaken by evil spirits. “Taveez” is an ornament made of silver for brides also. There is no paper, etc in it, but because of its beautiful shape it was included in the ornaments. A chain having some amulets hanging to it was called “Taveez Maal”.



COMMON SUPERSTITIONS

1. SUPERSTITIONS

Kashmir is rich in folklore, myths, legends and superstitions. There are some people who deem the purring of a cat, the hooting of an owl, the continuous or untimely barking of dog, the crowing of a cock during night as bad omen. Folk belief about ghosts, supernatural beings is still being transferred to new generations in one or the other way. There are countless superstitions related to trees, caves, mountains, rivers, springs, animals, birds, stars, and diseased persons. We come across a number of supernatural and superstitious characters in Kashmiri folktales and mythological narratives such as USUR Booth, Yach, Peshag, Danov, Dyet, Rakshas, Vaetal, Gohakh, Gandhro, Tasrufdaar, Deav, Dakhil, Raye, Pari, Rantass, Daaen, Vihaat, Moujdivath, Mushraan, Shutel bued, Rahchok, Charagbeg, etc. A number of superstitions are related to religious rituals. Dr. Farooq Fayaz writes in his book *Folklore and History of Kashmir*:

The average Kashmiri's strict adherence to a variety of superstitions dates back to the earliest time. Rooted in the collective folk psyche, it stood firmly against any religious change in Kashmir experienced at various intervals of its history. Its deep imprints could not be erased altogether.

Many rituals are common to Muslims and Pandits of the valley. Superstition starts from the very birth of a child. The movement of pregnant women is restricted during lunar or solar eclipses. She is forbidden to cut anything with a knife or repair anything when the eclipse is at its apex stage. Kashmiri Pandits observe fast, if the family priest says that the eclipse may auger evil for couples. Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims rever the popular shrines of saints and seers equally, tie votive threads and rags (desh) for wish fulfillment. When the wish gets fulfilled, the committed offerings are made and charities or alms are given in the form of animal sacrifices and denotations in cash or in kind.

2. RANTAS

There are a large number of supernatural characters in the folklore of Kashmir from times immemorial. During chilly winter nights, when abundance of snowfall paralysed the entire village life in Kashmir, people living near forests with a variety of wild animals developed a kind of fear- psychosis which forced them to believe in the existence of scary supernatural characters like veivoph, Bram Bram chowak, Rantas, Dens, Yetch and others of like.

"Rantas" is one of the tyrannical supernatural characters in the folktales of Kashmir. She is called "Rai and Daien" as well. As per folk tradition it is a dangerous imaginary being. Though people cannot see her yet it is believed that she has long hair. Her breasts are extraordinarily big in size hanging backward on her shoulders. She is able to change her body into various shapes. Her magical power is hidden in her comb tied to her long hair. Rantas lives in forests and deserted places. She comes to human habitats during winter. It is also believed that she is fond of killing men. She becomes a servant when her comb is taken out of her hair and kept hidden at an unknown place. She becomes helpless and powerless. Different stories are told in different villages of Kashmir about "Rantas".

3. BRAM BRAM CHOK

"Bram Bram Chok" is a deceitful mysterious being who misleads innocent travelers particularly during winter. His eyes are on his head, which send out flames and the traveler loses his wits and goes into a state of unconsciousness. Then the traveler dies and the ghost makes him food for some days. It is said that sometimes the traveler is so frightened by the ghost that he loses his way and takes different directions untill he dies in desperation. The superstition about the "Bram Bram Chok" has become a folk belief. Bram Bram Chok is called "Bram Rah Chok" also in various places. Some people deem him a dangerous ghost. They say that he can be seen from far away but the fact is that he has never been seen. He is an imaginary cunning

being as shown in Kashmiri folktales. Mystic poets have also used the "Bram Bram Chok" in their poetry.

4. SHUTEL BUED

"Shutel" in Kashmiri language means 'small pox' and "Bued" "old woman". Similarly "Houlhej Bued" is an old woman with chicken pox and "Musil Bued" or "Mazhar Bued" is responsible for spreading cholera. Those are deemed as old invisible women. All these characters are supernatural. The diseases mentioned above have disappeared but the characters to which those are related are alive in folk tales, etc. It was believed that the characters mentioned above are responsible for spreading the fatal ailments. In case they were displeased, they sent the diseases and people could not cure them. They tried to keep them happy by special offerings and believed that the forces would spare them from the ailments. They believed that Shutel Bued, Houlhej Bued and Musil Bued were ghastly beings like "Rantas" without ever seeing them. Only rumours about them used to go from one habitat to another. Some people used to cook chicken with "Tahar" and distribute it among children and neighbours to keep the evil forces at bay. The custom is called "Shutel Kokur".

Living in ignorance and illiteracy, Kashmiris generally attributed the outbreak of epidemics to the displeasure of supernatural agents and forces than to their uncongenial and unhygienic physical surroundings. The offerings of sheep, goat, silver and gold were made to get rid of the deadly diseases.

5. MOAJ DEVATH

"Moaj Devath" a supernatural character is used not only in folk literature but also in day-to-day language. There are some proverbs and idioms in use such as Devath Walin (to put to disgrace) Devat Vasuen (disgraced, not to feel ashamed on committing a fault), Devat Bihine (to bestow with blessing and grace). In various folktales "Devath" suddenly helps people who feel disgusted and helpless. "Devath" in folk literature is

personified as a “graceful and helpful” old lady, so she is called “Moaj Devath” (Devath, the mother).

Contrary to common folk belief it is said that “Devath” is a diety of grace and prosperity. During various rituals of Kashmiri Pandits some terms are used with reference to the diety such as “Devte Goole” (balls of cooked rice which , prepared at the time of “Havan” or “Devgun”, are offered to water), “Devte Thaal” (plates filled with food in the name of deities) and “Devte Khir” (rice cooked in milk in the name of deities) etc.

6. HURRI RAZEH

“Hurr” is birth bed. People in Kashmir, both Hindus and Muslims, used to make a bed of grass or soft straw of Druab (or koin) for women before childbirth. After the delivery the straw bed was thrown away occasionally, on third day, seventh day, eleventh day and so on up to fourteenth day. The room was swept and cleaned and a new straw bed was arranged. The straw beds along with all kinds of dirt were thrown at a particular place, called “Hurri Wan”. It was a specific place fixed by the residents of a mohalla or village. Different families used to fix the place separately for their use. This place was considered very danderous on account of being the abode of “Hurri Razeh”, or “the king of Hurr”. It was necessary to please the “Hurr Razeh” lest the mother and the child should face danger and evil spirits. In the villages people hesitated to visit “Huur wan”. At the time of throwing straw beds into the “Hurr Waan” people used to offer “Tahar” to “hurri Razeh”. It was done by both Muslims and Hindus. “Hurr Razeh” was worshipped by Hindu women at the time of “Burze Meaat”.

7. PRAH TE TASRUF

“Prah” is delivered from Sanskrit word “Prasha”. The word “Praha” is used in Kashmiri for “Khochun, Tasruf Gachun, Laye Gachen, Panthun”. According to superstition, some invisible supernatural being, such as Deav, Dakhel, Raai, Rantass,

Rah Choik, Tasruf Daar, Mushraan, Hurri Razeha frighten and possess human beings by entering into their body, suspending their minds and nervous system. Human beings, who fall prey to the superstitious beings feel and behave strangely. Sometimes they lose their senses, take strange actions, weep, and they are not considered normal human beings. In this situation, they are taken to Pirs, Fakirs, Sadoos, and magicians. They give them charms, amulets, Isband, Fatillas, and other things. Their parents are advised to perform charity, distribute alms and arrange for "Khatm-e-Shareef. Red dried chillies are burnt near their noses. All the efforts are done to get rid of the "Prah and Tasruf".

8. SHISHUR LAAGUN

As soon as the winter season begins, custom of finding ways and means to keep off the evils spirits, demons, yeches, Tasrufdars, gets underway. People used to tie a "shishar Raech", an amulet on caps, pherans or arms of children and newly married girls, to protect them from the evil spirits, demons, Tasruf, etc. A coin of one paisa with a hole in centre, some sesame seed and some lime was wrapped in a piece of cloth in the shape of an amulet tied to the pheran or cap, called "shishur laagun" or "Shishur Gandun". On the occasion of "Shishur laagun" a feast was served to nears and dears and some neighbours, particularly if there was a recently married daughter in the house.



KASHMIRI FOLK LITERATURE

1. LUKA KATHA

Prose narratives having all elements of traditional story telling, preserved through human memory transmitted from one person to another, one generation to another orally, by professional story tellers or common folk under the broader category of folktales, are called Luka Katha (folk tales) in Kashmiri. It usually begins with a reference to the unknown teller who is said to have heard it in recent or distant past. In Kashmiri prose narrative, there is a wide variety of folk tales such as Padsha Katha (stories of Kings), Pari Katha (Fairy tales), Shure Katha (children's tales), etc. Kashmiri folk story tellers have created a treasure of folk tales. Some of the kinds of folk tales are fables, parables, legendary tales, tales about supernatural events and characters. Man has always tried to mediate with the natural and supernatural powers by means of creating folktales depicting bravery, wit, wisdom, love, affection and conflict. In addition to entertainment Kashmiri folktales are a source of learning and developing wit and wisdom, satire and humor and social values while the moral subtext of the folktales is always universal. Children picked up their sense of rectitude through the tales told by their parents or the professional storytellers. The professional storyteller is called "Daleele-Ghour" in Kashmiri. In the past in every family the eldest person was "Daleele-e-Ghour". The parents or the "Daleel-e-Ghour" used to give moral lessons through the folktales to their listeners particularly to children. Arrival of an expert "Daleel-e-Ghour" into a village was an event nobody would miss. People liked to listen to folktales like Jungle Shahzuda, Chalkh Nayid, thagas Te Thag, Khire Zeevoon Raj, Chalkh Kfour, Aaan Maani, Shhalkakh, Rantass Te Kfour, etc.

The tradition of telling the folktales is now almost extinct in Kashmir. The invasion of television, internet and cinema over-

took the tradition and now the treasure of Kashmir folktales is only a material for study of past.

2. LOUK BAETH

“Louk Baeth” are folksongs of a group. Like all the genres of folk literature Kashmiri folk songs were transferred from generation to generation orally. Folk poetry is an important and vast branch of Kashmir’s folk literature. A line of a folk song is composed by a person, while he is at work or feeling happy. Gradually, others add more lines to it and a folk song is thus composed. Its originator or poet remains unknown. Folk songs are the real representatives of the aspirations, agonies, joys, sorrows, customs and collective psyche of the people. There are folk songs related with festivals, agriculture, handicrafts, weather, forests, environment. There are also lullabies, wedding songs (Nende-Baeth), and Thajkaad Baeth (songs related to plantation of paddy saplings, etc.) Vanvun, Rov, Khandar Ghavun (marriage songs), Meakhle Baeth (songs related to Yagnopavit), Ladi Shah (Balads), Pahale-Baeth (shepherds songs) and Manzle Baeth (cradle songs). Kashmiris possess a great treasure of folk songs. With the passage of time some folk songs are forgotten and new songs take their place, making folk poetry a rich and endless treasure. During the second half of the nineteenth century a number of European visitors, missionaries and administrative experts came to Kashmir. The rich cultural heritage and folklore caught their attention. They believed that folk lore and folk literature was true mirror of a society. Some of them like J. Hinton Knowles, Aurel Stein, George Abraham Grierson and Sir Walter Lawrence collected, compiled, evaluated and got published in Roman script different genres of Kashmiri folk literature such as folk tales, sayings, phrases. Some of them focused on Kashmiri language and others collected and got published poetry of various established poets like Lal Daed, Mahmood Ghami, etc. But the Europeans gave less attention towards collection of Kashmiri folk songs.

In 1913 one of the authentic representatives of folklore of South Asia and a world class folklorist, Anand Kumara Swamy came to Kashmir and stayed here for more than a period of two months. His wife Rattan Devi was also with him. They collected more than two dozen Kashmiri folk songs. In 1913 Swamy published a book entitled *Thirty songs from Punjabi and Kashmiri*. The folk songs collected by Anand Kumara Swamy and his wife in Kashmir appeared in this book. It is perhaps the first collection in which Kashmiri folk songs were included. The lucid introduction of the book was written by Rabindra Nath Tagore. Anand Kumara Swamy was from Sri Lanka. Mohammad Yousuf Tariq the celebrated critic, researcher and writer, has written a valuable article about the works of Anand Kumara Swamy with regard to Kashmiri folk songs in his book, entitled "Kashir Kitab". Some of the specimens of the folk songs collected by Anand Kumara Swamy and his wife and included in the "Thirty songs from Punjabi and Kashmiri" are given here, as they are the oldest ones recorded and published:

HA VESYAE BAHAR AAV GULAN
SOAY KAL BULBULAN CHAY

(O, my friend spring came and flowers bloomed. Bulbuls have the attraction of the same.)

GARE BARE DRAYAS ALAN TE DALAN
RASE RASE VACHUES MANASBAL

(I came out of my home and slowly reached Manasbal.)

MOAJ KIYA DITUY MANASBALAN
HA VESYAE BAHAR AAV GULAN

(The Manasbal Lake is in full swing. O, my friend spring came and flowers bloomed.)

LAEG PHULAY BADAMAN
SU KAMAN GOVY MOTUY

(Almond flowers bloomed but my lover did not turn up. I do not know if he fell in love with someone else.)

LAEG PHULAY SANDE BHATHEAN
VOATH GANGLAN KHASAVOV

(Banks of river Sind bloomed. Come, let us go to enjoy the blossom in forests.)

RANGE RANGE PHALE POASH VANAN
CHE KANAN GOVUY NA MEUNOY

(Different flowers bloomed in forests. O, my love, didn't you hear me?)

After 1960, Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages published 13 anthologies of Kashmiri folk songs.

3. DASTAN

Dastan is a long tale with romantic and supernatural elements with a number of plots woven together. Every Dastan has a beginning, climax and end. Dastan-Goi means telling a long story. "Dastan" and "Goi" are Persian words. An overwhelming proportion of Dastans abounds in supernatural elements, so much so that supernaturalism is considered essential to Dastan. A common conception is that Dastan is a long versified story in the form of Masnavi. In this connection it is necessary to keep in mind that a story created and told in form of Masnavi is a creative work of one poet or person but Dastan of folk nature as a genre of folk literature are oral in nature and have undergone changes in the process of transferring from one generation to another. A number of folk tales has been given the shape of "Masnavi" by poets in

Persian and Kashmiri as well. In our oral tradition Masthnavi Khani (reading and reciting of Masthnavi) is named as "Kitab parien" ('reading a book', among the uneducated masses Kitab was considered "Book of stories") but to tell a Dastan is a different thing. Masthnavi is a genre of poetry and there is no place for prose, while Dastans are available in both prose and verse together and are written in both prose and verse. Dastans differ in version and content from place to place, even from person to person.

Heemal, Aka-Nandun, Vouzramaal, Talourazdiaan, Shahpari, Shahlala, Zuharkhatoon, Lalmallpari, Khanjarshah, etc are well known Dastans in Kashmiri folk literature. The Dastan which originated in Kashmir reflect many forgotten events of history. Many Dastans came in form of Musthnavis from other countries and gained popularity. Some of those are Laila Majnoon, Gule Bakawali, Sheerin Farhaad, Saam Nama, Mumtaaz Baynazir. Gulraze, Gul-o-Snobar, Dastane Amir Hamza etc. All the Dastans adopted from other languages have undergone changes both in context and characterization. These Dastan's have little content common with the original, for example "Laail Nama" (originally "Laila Majnoon") and Saam Naama (originally "Saam Nama) (masthnavi) are quite different in Kashmiri as compared to the original stories from other countries.

Dastan-Goi in Kashmir is an old oral tradition. During the months of extreme cold, the sources of recreation for Kashmiri people were to listen to Dastan, Daleele (folktales) and masthnavis. The professional Dastan-Go (storyteller), a much-in-demand person, was sought to entertain the common folk assembled together for the purpose. Some of the well known Dastangos were Wali Aagur (Kulgam), Aziz Shah (Nambal Mattan), Mukhtar Mir (Chevdara) Subhan Shah (Darigan) Nabir Thokar (Aung Matipora), Khalil Dar (Sopore), Gulam Usman (Sopore). Ismail Mir of Muj Gund is most popular Dastan-go of the recent day. Habibullah Nishati and Ali Mohammad Bhat of Frisal Kulgam are also Dastan-gos of the

present times. A Dastango, while telling the Dastan is helped by one of his colleagues. He seconds him for all the portion of Dastan. Besides, the Dastan-go has a party of colleagues who sing the versified parts of the Dastan with him. When the prose portions of the Dastan are related by Dastango, all the members of party remain mum and one member helps the Vousta (ustad-Dastango). In the past, Tumbaknar and Noat (earthen pot) were the musical instruments used by a Dastan-go party. Now in addition to Noat and Tumbakhnari, Sarangi, Rabab and Harmonium are used as well.

Dastans are rich in presenting various aspects of old and contemporary culture. Music, dance, superstitions, religious beliefs, deeds of heroes, accounts of courage, supernatural elements, myth and mythology, folk beliefs and epics are amply presented in Dastans. Kashmir is rich in this oral tradition.

4. BURZ METCHI HEIND BAETH

“Burz Meaat Kaden” was a rite among Kashmiri Pandits, related to the birth of a child, “Burz Meaat” means to fold pieces of birch bark and roll them between the palms of one’s hands and “Kaden” is to throw out. According to the custom, when the rite of “Sundar” celebrated on seventh day for the “Losa” is completed, the next morning ladies from neighbourhood are invited around the “Huur” (the straw bed) a “Veug” is traced by chalk or by scattering flour. Near the mystic figure a burning earthen lamp is kept on “Gase Aaar” (grass rounded and folded in shape of a cap), a pestle kept standing, birch-bark and some water is kept nearby. A lady folds the birch-bark and burns it in her hand. The burning “Burz Meaat” (Birch-Bark) in the earthen lamp, is waved round the mother, baby and then over the heads of other ladies present. During this rite, the lady with the lamp in her hand dances round the “Huur” (the straw bed). During round after round she recites some songs related to mother, newborn and Huur Razeh (the king of Huur) and “Huuri waan” (a place where all the straw beds are thrown out.) The ladies present repeat the songs after the elderly lady.

All these songs are called "Burz Metchi Hieund Baeth", which are now obsolete. After burning the "Burz" the burnt "Burze Meaat" is thrown into water or into the "Huur Leag", a big earthen pot kept always in the room where the "Loasa" is kept. "Loasa" is the woman who has delivered the baby. An example of the songs of "Burze Meaat" is given under:

*Huri Raza
Bakeshy Nai
Khema Kerynai
Sahitayetas Rozymai
Khowash Nirnai
Raaiṣ Rooṣnai
Shoq Te ponson*

(May "huur Razeh" pardon you. I wish him to help you, be he happy with you. He should leave this house with his full consent. Let his help bless us with a lot of love and money.)

5. MANZLE BAAETH

"Manzle Baaeth" are cradle songs. These songs are considered a lovely genre of Kasfmiri folk poetry. Rocking the cradle to and fro slowly the mother recites the songs and the baby goes to a sound sleep. If the mother is away, any elder member of the family, elder sister or brother, is engaged in rocking the cradle and singing the Manzle Baaeth. Cradle songs are of various kinds such as:

A. CHIT BALAN

Sometimes the baby is cradled in the arms of its mother or elder sister and she recites some verses very quickly one after another for a while. The verses are called "Chit Balan" such as:

<i>Chite Balan Tae Chite Balan</i>	<i>Chite Balan Tae Chite Balan</i>
<i>Kana Door Garyoo Doan</i>	<i>Chite Balan Tae Chite Balan</i>
<i>Vagnas Chani Mohzalan</i>	<i>Chite Balan Tae Chite Balan</i>

(We play Chite Balan, the Chit Balan. I will get two earrings for you, I am trapped in your love, we play Chite Balan.)

B. KATE KATE BAAETH

The verses which make the babies and children laugh are called the "Kate Kate Baaeth" (songs for children and babies laughter) such as:

Vadvane Gobro Oush Mov Traav
Kavan Travae Reak Ad Paav
Adhan Thav Chandas Sa Khaze Vandas
Adhan Thav Aalis Sa Khaze Retkalis

(O, weeping baby, be mum, do not shed tears. Crow threw or-dure on you, keep some of it in your pocket for winter and preserve some for summer.)

Cradle songs are full of hope, blessings, prayers, love and affection for babies. Some songs are meant for inculcation of moral values, some are only for the babies, and some for consolation and satisfaction of mothers:

Goure Goure Karyo Kankay Doorou
Kankay Doorou
Hoora chaya Vanvaan
Van Kostonou

(O, my earring, I will rock you, O, my earring, "Hoors" from heaven are singing for you, O, my Vankostoor).

6. VANVUN

"Vanvun" is an interesting, impressive and enchanting form of Kashmiri folk poetry. It is alive and in progress from times immemorial. There is no marriage ceremony in Kashmir in which "Vanvun" songs are not recited. It is an integral part of both Hindu and Muslim marriage ceremonies. One of the striking features of the "Vanvun" songs is that women often

compose them on the spot and according to the occasion and atmosphere.

“Vanvun” is said to be the term of “Van Van” which literally means repetition. The two lines of a “Vanvun” song are called a “Hur” (“a pair”). Women standing up in two parallel lines is called “Dour”. Women in one (line) start the song and those in the other repeat. Repetition is necessary. The women walk behind the palanquin or car of the bride and horse or car of the groom, reciting the “Vanvun” songs. Usually women sit round the groom or bride, make two “Dhare” and go on reciting “Vanvun” songs. “Vanvun” songs are long and the “Vanvun” songs of Kashmiri Pandits are more religious and repetitive. It is said that these “Vanvun” songs of Kashmiri Pandits are based on the pattern of Vedic Shalooks.

As the “Vanvun” songs are being recited from ancient past through all the stages of marriage ceremonies they are a record of everything pertaining marriages. “Vanvun” songs have preserved costumes of bride and bridegroom, wazwan, gifts, way of service for guests, ornaments, means of transport, as they existed throughout different periods of Kashmir’s cultural history.

At the time of departure of the bride women recite ‘vanvun’ songs that create an emotional environment. Some examples are:

*Kuthen Henz Kunze Kar Maji Hawalay
Nieari Kore Warivikh Samalai*

(Hand over the keys of the house to your mother, O, daughter, you go to tour “Variv” the house of your husband.)

*Voneuk Tam Aasekh Herboun Rachi
Bab Sanz Tachi Gare Gachkaay*

(Till now, you were watching your father’s house, O, dear, now are you going to your own home.)

Kore Moual Divan Her Boun Vonyae
Gobre Moual Drav Lari Kanyai Dith

(Father of the bride is looking up and down, father of the groom has laid foundation of new building by taking the bride to his own home.)

Lohore Tota Te Kashiri Hari
Tobi Doan Kati Gai Parizaan

(O, parrot from Lahore and Kashmiri "Haair" (myna), where did you make acquaintance.

7. VAAN

"Vaan" means to mourn aloud or a shop or a long sound, etc. "Vaan" indicates mourning for a disessed person and highlighting his good deeds and habits, etc by reciting "vaan songs". Vaan songs are in vogue in all the societies of the world in one or the other way. According to Hindu Dharam "Vadan Vaan" (the mourning songs) is important. "Vaan songs" were recited by women. An experienced and respectable lady, who is bound to be wellversed in religious matters, undertook this Darmic custom and it became her duty to carry on the ritual. She was honoured and paid for this work and was called "Vane Gaer or Vane Reaaun". "Vaan songs" were recited continuously for ten days from the death of an aged family member. This practice was not in vogue for young deceased persons.

"Reent" was one more kind of mourning songs recited by a Muslim lady called "Reante Ghaer". "Vaan" were recited only in Hindu families and "Reaant" in Muslim families. The Reaant and Reaant Ghare did not last long, but it is said that the classical "Marsy" for mourning of Hazrat Imam Hussain elements of "Vaan" have been retained. Now, there are neither "vane Ghare nor Reante Ghare" but some "Vaan" songs are still available.

*Kak Gov Barzul Baagh Andr
Nushi Koreh Anen Kaih Sunder
Lari Jaie Lazan Kaih Sunder
Veda Purnai Kaih Sunder
Vakta Guzornai Kaih Sunder
Ahanbi Pouz Chakh Vanan*

(Kak went to the garden of Barzala i.e. he died. He managed to have a blissful family. He built a beautiful home. He recited "veds" during his life time and spent a beautiful and prosperous life. O, respectable lady, yes, you speak the truth)

*Boch Maai Lajee Maaji
Treash Maai Lajee Maaji
Tir Maai Lajee Maaji*

(Are you hungry, Mother? Are you thirsty, Mother? Are you feeling cold?)

8. PRETCHE

Riddles are found in all languages and Kashmiri language is very rich in this genre of folk literature. Riddles are called "Pretche" in Kashmiri. The riddle is a complicated question. In the riddles symbols and metaphors are used, which produce surprise and surprise is the soul of the riddle. Some riddles are in prose and some are versified. Riddles are for people of all age groups. Riddles are a source of entertainment and mental development as well. In the past "Prechtche Baze" (playing riddles) was common in Kashmir. To answer a riddle one has to apply his imagination and search for similarities between metaphors and similes, but the "Gandh" is mathematical. In addition to being recreational a riddle is a maxim for mental development, particularly for children. Some riddles are:

1. YAAM ZAV TAM KHOT KANEY PEATH

(the moment it was born, it straight-a-way went to balcony)

Answer: Smoke

2. MARAS MARI, TARASTARI, HARAS KHEAVHI CHONTH
TE TANG ATHE MALI DAPAN TREAIM ZANG

(It will kill the snake, help to cross a river, help to pluck fruits,
it is called the third leg)

Answer: A cane, a wooden rod.

3. CHOUT MOUAT KOKIH PHOAT
DOUNG DITH BEAYE KHOAT

(A rounded small and fat thing was drowned into river, after
taking a dip came out)

Answer: Noat (Pitcher)

9. DAPEIT TE MAHAVREH

Kashmiri language abounds in proverbs, idioms, sayings and other kinds of folk expressions. Kahavath and Zarbul misl are the two terms used for proverbs in Kashmiri. "Dapeit" is called a saying in English. All these are verbal art forms. Proverbs and sayings depict the wit and wisdom of Kashmiris. It has been truly said that proverbs embody the current and practical philosophy of an age or nation, and genius and spirit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs. Proverbs teach the real people's speech, and open up the hitherto sealed book of the native mind.

Kashmiri proverbs and sayings are masterpieces of truth, wisdom, wit, collective psyche, distinctive mentality, social behavior and thoughts and ideas, experiences and verbal art. Some examples of "Dapeit":

1. MULAN DROT TAH PATRAN SAG
"To cut the roots and water the leaves".

This proverb is used of a treacherous, intriguing man.

2. TSAREN KATHAN NE SUD
TSAREN GAGRAIN NA RUD
TSAREN TANGAN NA DUDH

"In many words there is no profit, with much thunder there is no rain, with much lowing there is no milk".

3. ALAN CHU PHAL, NENDAN CHU DANIH

"Ploughing gives harvest, weeding gives rice".

TALMIH

"Talmih" is a combination of some words which points to some ancient story, episode, accident, etc. The masses use Talmih in day-to-day speech but they are actually used as fossils of forgotten social and historical events, big or small. The Kashmiri language is full of "talmih". Poets use "Talmih" in their verses as well. Some examples are:

1. NALAM, KALAM YA HALAM
'Denial, the pen or begging'

2. BUDRI NATHUEN ADRY MUHAR
Wet stamp of Budri Nath"

3. NAMRUDEN DAM
"To boast like Nimrod"

4. RUDA PEIHAY, KAPSA BOWIHAY
WURH MAJIH KARIHA KORUH POTSHAK

"If it rains and cotton grows, I will make for my step - mother a 'brand new pheran'".

5. TAZ BUT-I-KAIN

“Tazi Bat’s arrow”

6. BIRBLUN KAT

‘Bir Bal’s ram’

MAHAVREH

1. A number of collections of Kashmiri phrases, proverbs and sayings have been published so far. Europeans like Abraham Grierson, J. Hinton Knowles, Aurel Stein and Sir Walter Lawrence were the first scholars who collected phrases, proverbs and sayings and got published in Roman script. Some sensible Kashmiris also undertook the job of collecting phrases, idioms, riddles and sayings. In this connection the first Kashmiri publisher and bookseller, Noor Mohammad of “Ghulam Mohammad Noor Mohammad publishers” deserves extra-ordinary credit for bringing out a series of low-cost folk literature publications in early twentieth century, much before the Cultural Academy came into being. After the small anthologies of Kashmiri phrases, proverbs and sayings were published by “Gh. Mohammad Noor Mohammad publishers” of Srinagar some Kashmiri writers like Prof. Mohiudin Hajini, Sudharshan Kashkari, Gh. Nabi Nazir, Nishat Ansari etc. collected and brought out anthologies of proverbs and sayings. Cultural Academy has done extra-ordinary job in this behalf.

10. BANDH PATHER

Bandh Pather is an age-old traditional folk play enacted by “bandhs”, the traditional and professional folk play actors. The tradition and form is handed down through the generations from father to son. Fathers train their sons to become skilful actors, dancers, acrobats and musicians. Bandh Pather is an interesting combination of acting, dance and play. It is said that the word Bandh comes from Sanskrit word, “bhana” a satirical and realistic drama, generally a monologue. The tradi-

tional word drama comes from "Pather" (Sanskrit = "Patra"). However, Bandh Pather is a traditional dramatic performance by professional Kashmiri bhandhs either in open air on a rough stage from times immemorial. More than a dozen Pathers have been established and are being performed regularly from ancient times. Bandh Pather is an important part of Kashmiri culture. It has served as a forceful and impressive source of entertainment and recreation and as a voice of peasant folk of Kashmir. Every Pather is full of humour, jokes, irony and sarcasm. Sir Walter R. Lawrence wrote:

The minstrels of Kashmir (Bugghat or Baand) can be recognized by their long black hair and stroller mien, as they are practically a peculiar people. They used to combine the profession of singing and acting with that of begging and were great wanderers, travelling down to the Punjab where they performed in Kashmir audiences with the curious exceptions of the Akingam company. They are much in demand on marriages and at harvest time they move about the country. Their orchestra usually consists of four fiddles with a drum in the centre or more. Their acting is excellent and songs pretty. They are very pleasant people and their mirth and good humour form a cheerful contrast to the gloom of Kashmiri peasant. They have a peculiar argot (phirkath) which they employ in stage directions. They relieve the sadness of village life in Kashmir.

Members of the Baand party use the musical instruments Surnai, Dhol, Nagara and thaluj. During the Pathan period Bhandhs included a bacha (boy dancer) in their music parties. Bhandhs manage to perform a series of Pathers at one place once or twice in a year, called the "bandh Jeshin". Jeshan is a great ceremony of bandhs and people gather there in great numbers and enjoy the shows. One more interesting thing called "Bandh Chowkh" is also a part of Pather performances. "Bandh-e-Doykhaar" (a prayer or blessing) is one more important element of Bandh Pather. Magun leads the "Bandh-e-Doykhaar". Every Pather or Jashin starts with it and also ends at it. They

pray for prosperity, peace, plenty of food grains, freedom from exploiters and good health of all the people living in Kashmir and other parts of world.

The Bhands are found in almost all districts of Kashmir and performances are a regular feature of their life. They present Pather, music and Dhamael at the shrines of Rishis and saints at the time of their anniversaries, urs and fairs. They never forget to perform at the shrines of Hazrat Baba Naseebudin Gazi of Bijbehara and Hazrat Baba Zainudin Reshi of Aushmuqam. Unfortunately some of the Pathers have died, some are becoming rare. The form is taking on new elements and continues to survive. The music has changed and traditional Muqams, ragas are played very seldom now.

11. LADISHAH

A bard type folk entertainer called Ladishah used to recite humorous and satiric poetic compositions in a peculiar tune, playing on Dehra (a small iron rod with copper rings around it) moving from one habitat to another especially during harvest-ing period, both in cities and villages. Romantic or religious Masnavis, popularly named as "Nama" i.e. Naar nama, Bunile Nama, Draagnama, etc, when recited to the accompaniment of the Dehra, are also called Ladishah. However, Ladishah is regarded as a type of folk literary genre.

Ladishah was a poor man who performed his art for edibles in return. He was a nan-ghar (a person having no cultivable land). In those days he used to wear ragged clothes due to poverty. In the late eighteenth century Ladishah used to wear a neat and clean Pheran, white trousers and a white turban, hanging a long white cloth over his shoulders. He was a popular folk entertainer. People would wait for him and welcome him. Children felt happy when Ladishah performed.

Ladishah is also considered as a folk historian. He usually directed his criticism and satire against the aggressive revenue officials, anti-social elements and religious exploiters. Eliciting the astonishment and laughter of people he criticizes new

social changes, differences among the members of joint family, the khanadamadi institution and other unusual events. He gives sad and satiric accounts of natural calamities like floods, droughts, fires, famines, earthquakes and dangerous ailments and atrocities of government officials. He has provided and proved to be a source of mental consolation for the enslaved Kashmiris in the past centuries. The available poetic compositions recited by Ladishah such as Beagair (forced labour), Angraz Qanoon (English law), etc. are important sources of forgotten and ignored chapters of the social life of Kashmiri villages. Ladishah, the art of embedded satire in songs has been pleasing the Kashmiri ear for ages but now it is faced with extinction.



MUSIC AND DANCE

1. HAFIZEH NAGMEH

"Hafizeh Nagmeh" is combination of Kashmiri saaz, dance and singing. "Hafizeh" (Hafiza) denoted a young charming woman with a sharp memory and dancing skills. "Nagma" is a melodious song. Kashmiri Sazandar (players of musical instruments) play music and a beautiful woman dances and sings. "Hafizeh Nagma" is an enthralling experience for the listeners. Hafizah denoted a charming woman who could remember songs ranging from Hafiz of Sheeraz to Rasul Mir of Kashmir. Although the quarters of Hafiza were the abode of dance and song, she basically symbolized good manners and aristocratic etiquettes. The institution seems to have reached its zenith during Mughal times. It was one of the most important sources of recreation for elite and the aristocracy.

Tashvan and Maisuma are two localities in Srinagar city where Hafiza pavilions were situated, but during the Dogra regime, the institution of Hafiza Nagmeh was converted into prostitution. Following a fierce campaign launched by Subhan Naid of Maisuma Maharaja banned the prostitution in 1943.

2. BACHE NAGMEH

"Bachi" means a boy and Nagma a melody. Bacha in a chakri party is a boy dancer. The party always prefers to have a bacha dancer with it to dance to the tunes of chakur, who leads the singing and expresses the essence of each couplet of the song through gestures. A bacha dancer usually wears a Peshwas (jama), which is skintight at the arms, chest and hips and has a loose skirt touching the ground and a dupatta on shoulders. He wears anklets also. Bacha Nagma formed one of the major sources of public jubilation. Chakur turns into Bacha Nagma, when a Bacha dancer joins the party and dances on the tune of the songs sung by singers. Bacha nagma was arranged on festive occasions in the Dongas on Dal Lake. This institution

was established as an alternative to Hafiza Nagma. The musical instruments traditionally used in the dance are Saran (Sarangi, Rabab, Tumbaknari and Dohlak. The Bache Nagmeh has witnessed renewed interest in performance in the recent past.

3. CHAKER

One of the most popular forms of traditional music accompanied by dance and poetry is called Chakur (Chakri, in other languages). This choral form of singing is an excellent outcome of the music history of Kashmir. There are more than three singers in a Chakri-party; the Vousta (Ustaad-expert) can perform anywhere in the open, in a room or on stage. Noout (earthen pitcher), Rabab, Saran (Sarangi) are the basic musical instruments used by Chakri singers. Harmonium was included at a later stage in it as the instrument. Depicting the melodic tradition of folk music that evolved in the valley of Kashmir decades back, Chakur truly upholds the heritage of culture and art of the State. Chakur is sung at all important occasions in Kashmir such as marriage ceremonies, celebration of Urs of saints, Rishis and Sufis. Kashmir has produced many expert chukur singers who are called "ustad". Some of them are Abdul Gaffar Kanihami, Abdul Gaffar Niema, Abdul Gani Trali, Ghulam Qadir Langoo, Mohan Lal Aiema, Ghulam Mohammad Dar, Habib-ullal Bambo, Ali Mohammad Sheikh, Zoon Begum, Ghulam Ahmad Sofi and Abdul Rashid Hafiz. Women sing and play Chakur on marriage ceremonies with a fast and charming rhythm. They use Trami (copper plates), Noout (earthen pitcher) and bunches of keys as musical instruments.

4. HIKAT

Hikat is a form-cum-game dance for young girls. Two to four girls stand and firmly hold hands and start circling; as they increase speed, they sing short lines from folk songs. They dance rapidly in the circle and their panting can be heard by the on-lookers. Usually the Hikat lasts for a short while. When Rov song and dance reaches its climax, two girls come out from

the “Rov” party, clap their hands facing each other and start the Hikar. During the performance both the girls take the hem of their Pherans in their right hand and sing while performing various quick and ingenuous moves. Hikar is performed during festive occasions and the month of Ramzan, Idd and social ceremonies. A specimen of Hikar song:

HIKAR KAROV	HIKAR KAROV
TRIKAR MONOV	DAAN KHAR
RANOV KATAY	VAZVAAN
ADE NARO	GINDNAY
RIND PHOO PHOO	

(We will do Hikar and husk one “Khiwar” paddy. We will prepare “Vazvaan” and eat in the kitchen. Then we will play. Hip Hip Hurray!)

5. SUFIANA MUSIQUI

The old name of this music was “Sazandar Geavun”. Some people consider it a part of classical music and some are of the opinion that it is an enhanced and modified shape of folk music. In fact it is classical music, introduced in the fifteenth century Hijri in the valley. It is believed that it is a combination of Iranian, Tooranian, and Indian “Raaga”. It has been called Hind – Iranian Mosiqui.

Accompanied with traditional folk musical instruments of Wasool, Tabla, Sitaar, Santoor and Saz - e – Kashmir, the singers of Sufiana musiqi sing with full devotion and enthusiasm. An integral part of the rich cultural ancestry and religious legacy of Kashmir, Sufyana music of Kashmir portrays the unlimited love of a devotee for the supreme being. It boasts of an inherent divine element. It is not mandatory to sing only Sufi poets. Romantic poets are also sung in this genre. The singer’s melodious voices and enchanting “Saaz - o - Saroor” make the “Majlis” (gathering) pious and sacred. The listeners, who are usually devotees of sufi saints, are filled with an intense

sense of devotion and dedication on listening to sufiana music. Sometimes the listeners go into a mystic trance.

Singers of Sufiana music need hard work and patience acquiring mastery in the art. This music is sung as per "Sur", "Taal", "Maatra", "Gaat" and "Muqams". Time is already fixed for singing of different Muqams. Some of the "Ustads" (experts) who served this art are given below:

Ustad Ghulam Mohammad Qaleenbaf, Ustad Vazir Joo, Ustad Abdulla Joo, Ustad Khala Saieb, Ustad Ramzan Joo, Ustad Sidiq Joo, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Amirudin, Ustad Mohamad Abdula Tibat Bakal, Abdul Khaliq Setari, Mohamad Abdullah Setari and Gh Mohamad Saznawaz.

There is a dire need to preserve the Sufiaana Mousiqi and train new singers for the survival of this art.

6. DHAMEAL /DHAMBEAL

Dhameal or Dhambeal is a famous folk dance of Kashmir. It is a combination of "Vayun", dance and acting. "Vayun" means beating of drums (Dhol) and playing the surnaie. Dhamaleh dancers are commonly known as Dhamaleh Faqir and Dhamaleh Mayet. They are usually ten to forty in number, wearing Pheran, Shalwars, turbans and sometimes they put on rugged costumes as was the norm in the past. The number of the drums used during the performance is three to six. When they go to perform in a village, they walk in a line with their steps matching the beating of drums. On reaching a specified place they make a circle and take leap over leap at the beat of the drum. Two or more of them come out of the clan and dance in a particular way, jumping high and performing various moves. Then "Gatak Bazi" is played by them. The drummers go on beating the drums on different patterns called "Taal". There are various "Taals" used in beating the drums such as "Roosh", "Se Taal", Charakh Taal", Daaph Tall".

It is said that Dhamael and Dhambael are derived from Persian words "Dham" meaning 'to retain the breath'. Dhamali dancers at times hold their breath while performing and lose

consciousness so the dance is named as “Dhamael”. Some people call the dance “Dhambael” because they think it has been drawn from the Persian word “Dhambal” which means “Behind, walking close after one another”. The Dhamael dancers often walk in a line (behind each other). Despite the fact that this dance under different names and styles is also performed in different states in north India, Dhamael is purely Kashmiri folk art form. This dance is related to some distinguished Rishis and Saints of Kashmir. Dhamael is performed at Draigam, Chadoora, Wahthora, Zolar, Aushmuqam, Bijbehara. Dhamali dancers live in different villages of Kashmir. It is said that this dance is performed only by the men of Wattal tribe, wearing long colourful robes and tall conical caps which are usually studded with beads and shells. But people from other tribes such as Kaniel, Bhand and Pahael also join the dancers. Bhands are usually Dhamael dancers. Though every one in a Bhand theatre group performs Dhamael yet they prepare a separate group of Dhamael dancers as well. It is customary for Dhamael parties to come together and perform Dhamael at various shrines especially at the shrine of Hazrat Baba Naseeb – ud – din Gazi at Bijbehara at the annual Urs. The dance is performed with dedication and as a ritual. At various occasions a banner is fixed in the ground and the dance is performed around the banner. Some old Dhamael dancers perform “Zikir” on the drum beat. After the Dhamael is over, mothers in the crowd hand over their newborn babies to each dancer who takes them in his lap and perform “Wotta Dhamael”. It is believed that the babies will be free of fear for the rest of their lives.

If arrangements for survival and preservation of Dhamael are not made, the charming folk dance will vanish and it will be a great loss to the culture of Kashmir. Dhamael dancers are to be encouraged.

7. ROV

“Rov” is derived from “Ravun” meaning to make merry, sing and dance. City people call it “Rouf”. Rov is a popular traditional dance form accompanied by singing without musical instruments. It is purely folk in nature. It is said that Rov was performed by men and women together. But later on men desisted from it and it is now performed by women only.

Two groups of women stand in two circular rows, one facing the other. Women in each group keep their arms across the waists of each other. One group starts singing of a melodious folk song while the women move to front by bending a leg forward and then shift on the other leg creating a kind of front and back swaying motion. The rhythm of the motion corresponds with the rhythm of the song they are singing. The other group answers in the same manner. Rov songs are sung during festive occasions particularly on Idd, Shabi-Qadar, Shabi - Meraj and on the birth anniversaries of distinguished mystics, Sufis, saints and Rishis. During the holy month of Ramzan, women perform the Rov songs till midnight in the moonlight. Sometimes the women recite tragic songs about their own lives instead of the usual merry songs. They feel free to express their heartfelt aspirations such as:

ZOON KHACHMAAY LOVEA PAYMAY BABRAY
VASE ZOONAY BAYKASHTAN KHABRAY
BABA VAGNEAN BAB WATTAN KHABRAY
YAS NA AASAAN SA CHAN NEARAAN NAAZRAY
VASE ZOONAY BAYKASTAN KHABRAY
ZOON KHACHMAY LOVEA PAYMAY BABRAY

(The moon appeared in the sky and dewdrops are showered on sweet basil flowers; O, moon! Come down to see and know the condition of destitute and orphans. Women, whose fathers are alive, are fortunate. Their fathers come to see them. Those whose fathers are dead wait but in vain. They wait and wait. O, moon! Come down to know my condition.)

8. BANDEH CHOWKH

Bhands (wandering minstrels) perform a specific dance only at fixed places on first, third and last day of an Urs. "Bandeh Chowkh" is a peculiar dance and a part of Bandeh Pather yet Moti Lal Kemu has described it in following para:

"Chowkh in Kashmiri means a square. A mela or a fair held for four days in four villages is also known as chowkh. Such fairs are held soon after the transplantation when agriculturists get some respite. More than two dozen Surnai players stand together in a line and play their instruments. On either side there are more than twenty drummers (Dhol Players) and about a dozen Nagara players. In front of all the musicians there are about forty dancers and "Maskharas" who dance together in front of a Ziyarat. In the beginning all the dancers join their hands and move rightwards making a circular movement. Then they simultaneously take steps forward and backward. Then, waving their hands or clapping to the rhythm, they make circular movements. Some keep a long Chadar in their hands, and wave it exactly to the rhythm of the music and enter the arena. Then all of them stand in a row and each dancer dances individually, goes near the shrine, bows his head in reverence and turns back but keeps up with the rhythm throughout. Then all the dancers dance together.

9. QAWALI

Qawali is sung by a group of singers more than five in number. The head of the party is assisted by one or two members in repeating the main verse of the Qawali in the beginning of each part or portion. It is a mixture of slow and fast tunes but the repetition of both is separately emphasized. Qawalis are performed during religious and social congregations. It is a new genre in Kashmiri music like Late Wazir Ali, Late Ghulam Mohiudin Balpori, Mohammad Khalil of Wathora used to perform Qawali in Urdu and Persian to begin with. They later on sang Qawalis in Kashmiri as well. The experiment was successful and Qawali gained popularity. Abdul Ahad Parray of

Ganderbal, Athar Hussain Balpori, Mohammad Abass Balpori are known Kashmiri Qawali singers. Musical instruments used in Qawali are thali, dholak, harmonium, and tabla; clapping of hands plays an important role as well.

10. CHALLANT

Challant is a popular genre of Kashmiri music inaugurated by Late Ghulam Nabi Janbaz Kishtwari, commonly known as Ghulam Nabi Dolwal. He was a poet as well. He succeeded in binding Chakur and Sufiana music to create the Challant. There are five to seven performers in a challant party. The tune of singers remains milder than in Chakur and sharper than in sufiana music. This genre has gained popularity in the State. Ghulam Nabi Janbaz trained some singers who are doing their best to keep the genre alive. Some of them are Ghulam Qadir Badharwahi, Jehan Ara Janbaz, Nisar Hussain Dolwall, Ravi Thakar and Saleem Bhalesvi. Musical instruments used in Challant are harmonium, tabla, dholak, chumta, a glass beaten with a spoon and thali.

11. VEGI VATSUN

Sacred thread ceremony is one of the most important ceremonies of Kashmiri Pandits. An auspicious day is fixed and many rituals are performed. The sacred thread ceremony is performed for boys more than seven years age. On the occasion "Devgun" is performed and a huge "Agni Kund" is prepared, where prohibits recite vedic mantaras. Sacred thread ceremony in Kashmir is called "Meakhal".

After his thread ceremony and after performing "Yagnya" for the whole day, a Kashmiri Pandit boy leaves for the nearby riverbank and women gather around the "Veug" (Rangoli) and perform a dance, sing songs, wish wellbeing to the household and family members. They dance in a round-robin fashion and throw flower petals on each other. Such a dance was performed usually after every Yagnya (fire) ceremony by the Aryans in ancient times when they prayed for rain.

There are some songs in Kashmir folk poetry called, "Vegi Vatsan". Veug (Rangoli) is laid in the compound not only at the time of sacred thread ceremony but on the occasion of marriage ceremonies also.

12. SIDH GOOR NATSUN TE THAAIEN

Famous folklorist Moti Lal Kemu has described the "Sidh Goor Natsun" in the following words:

More than three decades have passed when eunuchs used to adorn themselves with lots of ornaments. Wearing embroidered female Pherans and then performing dances in the compounds of households where a bride had been brought in only a few days back. In the accompaniment a small cymbals and Dholak, two such eunuchs would dance and sing songs composed extempore in praise of the newly weds. They were known as Sidhgoors or "Ghar aye" singers because each line of their song ended with the words "Ghar aye". This "Sidh Goor Natsun" (the dance of eunuchs) has come to an end. "Thaaien" is a person, who compels the people to give him something. A party of two or three singers used to go from courtyard to courtyard for reciting verses in a peculiar way, dancing from one side to another in the courtyard. They were called "Thani Gher" and their recitation of verses and dancing in a rough style was collectively called "Thaaien". This all has now come to an end.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Any object with the help of which a musician can express a style, a sound or a rhythm is a musical instrument. Music without instruments is mere recitation of songs. Those songs are not able to produce melody. Without instruments there is no other alternative or standard with which the melody can be traced in the vocal sounds of the throat. Had there been not music or musical instruments there would not have been any melody.

In Kashmir musical instruments are made of different materials. Specific instruments are used during performance of different genres of music such as Harmonium, Dhol, Dholak, Rabab, Saran (Sarangi), Chumta, Santoor, Saaz - e - Kashmir, Tabla, Surnai (shehnai), Tumbakhnari, Tambora, Nout (Pitcher), Thalug, Rouan - e - Goad (anklets) and Peashrov and Vosool. Besides the traditional instruments, new instruments have also made place in Kashmir music. Clapping of hands still play the role of a musical instrument in various genres of Kashmiri music.

1. HARMONIUM

Harmonium, a wonderful invention, has proved to be an excellent and enchanting instrument for music. Harmonium is called "Baje" in Kashmiri. Every singer cannot become an expert of using the harmonium. Harmonium is used in Kashmir in all kinds of music except Sufiana Mousiqi. It is a wooden box with metal tongues (movable organ of the body with a loose end in the mouth) inside it. The air flow only excites the reed and the sound we hear is from the metal tongues and not that of the moving or vibrating air. Had it been the sound of vibrating air it would have been almost the same for each metal instead of being a separate one for each metal tongue.

2. DHOL TE DHOLAK

“Dhol” is a cylindrical wooden drum. Leather of goat or skin of fish is pasted artistically on both the heads of the Dhol. Both the heads are beaten by sticks. Dhol has played a significant role during wars since ancient times as it was beaten frequently at the time of invasion by warriors. Bhands (folk theatre artists) use the Dhol during their performances. On some occasions more than five Dhols are beaten together by the Bhands. A dhol player hangs the Dhol down his neck and ties it around his waist. In this way the hanging Dhol can be beaten, when the player is walking. A Dhol is at times beaten by a player sitting on the ground with the Dhol placed in front. There are some proverbs related to the use of Dhol in Kashmiri.

Dholak is smaller than Dhol. It is not cylindrical in shape. It is also a two-headed drum. Dholak is played during marriage ceremonies, and “Chalant and Qawali” singing.

3. TABLA

Musicians and experts of music are almost divided in opinion about the discovery of the Tabla. Some people believe that the founder of this instrument was the Sidhar Khan in Delhi but the majority is of the opinion that in the thieteenth century B.C. during the reign of All-ud-Din Khalji poet and musician Ameer-e-Khusru discovered it. It is said that in the beginning “Pakhawaj” was played for only “Drupad” but Tabla can be played with other “Raags” as well. Tabla is a two-piece drum which is jointly called Tabla. The right drum is called Tabla and the left drum as “Bayan”. The player strikes right drum with the ends of the fingers as well as with the flat palm. The left is played with all of the fingers, the flat palm and the base of the palm.

4. SURNAI

Surnai is an instrument especially used by Bhands (the folk theatre actors of Kashmir) during Bhand Pather (traditional folk plays) and Bhand Jashin. Surnai (Shehnaie) is called

“Surnai” also. It is made of walnut wood or apricot wood or “Tahal” (Tahal, the sheshim). It is a sophisticated musical instrument prepared by expert carpenters with full care. Three things are very important for it, “Tul”, made of copper, the “Vantan”, made of wood and “Barg”, made of reed. A Surnai has eight holes. A Surnai is played by blowing through the hole and stopping the air. It is said that Surnai was brought to Kashmir in the thirteenth century from Central Asia. It is said that carpenters of village “Vokai” in District Kulgam were expert Surnai makers. Unfortunately there is not a single expert available now in that village.

Surnai has taken its place as musical instrument in some older genres of music also. It is played on auspicious occasions, processions, weddings and concerts.

5. NAGARH

“Nagarh”, is not a musical instrument but it is commonly used by Bhands of Kashmir during the performances of Pather. It is beaten by stick and the sound it produces increases the charm of the performance. It is important like the “Dhol”. Word “Nagarh” is derived from Persian word “Naqara”. It was used in ancient times like Dhol, to proclaim government pronouncements and other declarations. “Nagarh” used by Bhands is a hollow round instrument made of baked clay with an open bottom. The bottom is covered with animal skin. It is fixed by an expert artistically. Late Mohammad Subhan Bhagat of Akingam was expert in this art. The skin fixed on the bottom is beaten by a stick and the thrilling sounds attracts the attention of the audience. In a performance, the number of Nagarh players is proportional to the number of surnai players. A small round instrument made of baked clay having an open mouth was considered a part of “Nagarh”. On its open mouth skin of goat was pasted artistically. A Nagarh player used to beat the Nagarh with a stick in right hand and the small round utensil, called “Peshrov” with a small thin stick in left hand. But “Peshrov” is no more used now.

6. VASOOLEH

“Vasooleh” was an important instrument for “Sufiana Mousiqi”. Along with other musical instruments, it was regarded compulsory for “Sufiana Mousiqi”. With the passage of time, this musical instrument has disappeared. It was like a “Dhol” but smaller in size. It was beaten by hands while the “Dhol” is beaten by small sticks. The celebrated saint and founder of Reshi-order Hazrat Sheikh-ul-Aalam Noor-ud-Din Reshi (fourteenth century) has used the word “Vasooleh” in one of his shruks. It shows the “Vasooleh” was a popular musical instrument during his time.

KAYA KARI VODUR THOOLASS
KAYA KARI NOOLAS DHOOP
KAYA KARI POUNZ VASOOLS
KAYA KARI ANIS ROOP

(An egg is of no use for an otter. Incense is useless to a mon-goose. What for is a “Vasooleh” to a monkey. Beauty is of no use to the blind.)

7. SANTOOR

The most impressive musical instrument, Santoor has special importance in Sufiana Mousiqi. It is commonly played by the leader of the party who has to be the best expert of playing the Santoor. A Kashmiri Santoor has 96 to 100 strings. This instrument is made of a box of wood and is trapezoid in shape. It is kept in front and played with two wooden sticks curved at the striking end. A set of four strings of metal turned to the same note is spread over each pair of bridges in it. It is the most prominent instrument used in Sufiana music in Kashmir. This instrument is very popular in India and many internationally acclaimed santoor players have emerged from the country. It is used for playing of classical Raaga. Kashmiri Sufiana musicians use it for playing various Muqams.

8. SAAZE KASHMIR

Saaze Kashmir is used only in Sufiana Mousiqi. It is said that this instrument was introduced in Kashmir in the fourteenth century with the arrival of Muslims. In Iran it was called "Khamancha" and "Kamangaha". After it reached Kashmir, it was adopted in a modified form and came to be used in Sufiana music. It began to be manufactured locally and was named as "Saaz - e - Kashmir". During the reign of Sultan Zain - ul - Aabidin Budshah it was played in his Darbar. Saze Kashmir resembles the Sitar in shape. It is a hollow instrument four feet and two inches in length. It has three or four strings. It is played by a stick called "Gaz" tied with it. The "Gaz" is some ten "Girah" long. Unfortunately Saze Kashmir and its expert players are on the verge of extinction.

9. SETAR

Setar or Sitaar is used only in Sufiana Mousiqi. The Kashmiri Setar is smaller than the Indian Setar. Originally its name was "Se - Taar", a Persian word meaning "three strings". It became "Setar" in Kashmiri. Another opinion is that it is identical to Sanskrit word "Tritantri". "Tri" means three and "Tantri" means strings. Some great "Setar" players of Kashmir were Ustad Ramzan Joo, Ustad Mohamad Abdullah Tibat Baqal, Ustad Ghulam Mohamad Qalinbaf and Abdul Khaliq Setari. Pandit Bhajan and Abay Sopori are celebrated "Setar Nawaz" of present times.

Setar is an important instrument based on the shape of the ancient veena. It is a long necked lute. It has gained popularity and prestige in recent times.

10. TUMBOOR

"Tumboor" is also known as Tanpoora. Some are of the opinion that this lute got its name from the words Tumbi or Tumbiphala, referring to a pumpkin. It is used in Indian music to create rhythm. It is considered to be an outstanding stringed instrument. The total length of a low pitched tamboora used

by men may be roughly one hundred and fifty centimeters, the high pitched one used by women is much smaller. This instrument has eleven parts. The first three strings of Tanpoori are of iron and the last one is of brass.

11. NOAT

“Noat” is the Kashmiri name for a pitcher, which is used for fetching and keeping water. Milk is also kept in pitchers. Pitchers are made of baked clay or brass or aluminium, etc. The pitchers made of baked clay were most common in Kashmir till recent past. The clay pitcher is used as a musical instrument in Kashmiri folk music. The instrument is decorated by painting it in different colours. It is round in shape with a small mouth on the top. The “Nout Player” strikes both his hands at the same time on two sides of the Noat and at times its mouth is also struck by the palms and the fingers. Noat is necessary for Chakur. It is easily available and used commonly in folk music.

12. TUMBAKH NAAIR

This instrument is made of baked clay. Its base is round like a pumpkin with the bottom covered with animal skin, mostly goat or sheep. It has a long neck open at the end and with a less wide hole on long side. “Tumbakh” refers to a pumpkin and “Naair” in Kashmiri means a small pitcher in which water, milk, etc, is kept reserved. Tumbak Naari is a hollow instrument. It is commonly used in Kashmiri folk music. Chakur, the most popular genre of Kashmiri folk music, cannot be performed without using Tumbakh Nari. It is played commonly by women folk of Kashmir during singing and dancing on marriages and other festive occasions. The skin fixed on the bottom of this instrument is struck with fingers, and flat palms.

13. SARAN

Sarangi is called “Saaran” in Kashmiri. It is the most common

musical instrument in Kashmir. It is essential for every party of folk music singers. Some folk singers while going from one courtyard to another in the harvest season to sing in return of paddy grains from farmers use only the Saran.

Saran is made of a single block of wood and is about two feet in height. The upper portion comprises a hollow body which is wide but tapered at the bottom, having its fingerboard. The lower portion is covered with goat skin and is used as the main sound box. The upper portion of Saran has a wooden cover. The principal strains are usually of gut. It is most notable for its finger technique. The Sarangi now is used in high brow concerts also.

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COSTUMES OF KASHMIR

Attire is called “Palov – Pushak” in Kashmiri. The world has become a global village now and sources of connectivity and transport have revolutioned every field of life. Kashmiris have adopted different costumes used in various countries of the world. Designs and patterns of dress and ornaments are changing and the change is being adopted gladly and rapidly. Weather conditions and geographical necessities have always influenced the dress and ornaments of Kashmiris. Financial status has played its usual role in clothing, setting off remarkable differences in attire between the elite and the commoners. There were, however some differences between the clothes of Hindus and Musalmans. Among the old costumes mentioned below, some have been modified and some have already gone out of use.

1. PHERAN

Perhaps the Persian word “Pairhan” has become “Pheran” in Kashmiri. It is a long loose gown with wide sleeves, which falls from neck to feet. Weight is given to the bottom of the “Pheran” with a hem. “Kangr” is kept under the Pheran to provide heat in winter. Pheran with a hem and turned sleeves is liked by Pandits. Pheran is commonly worn by all Kashmiris and it has become a mark of Kashmiri identity. In the past, the cloth for Pheran was prepared by Kashmiris in their homes. For winter Pherans were made of wool and for summer of cotton. The turned cuffs of the Pheran have been given due treatment in Kashmiri folk literature. With the passage of time the Pheran has undergone changes in design and adornment. “Pherans” beautified with “Tila” (minute golden strings, artistically used for making beautiful design on pherans) are the most important dress for brides. “Pheran” is liked by foreigners and they wear it during winter when on tour to Kashmir.

2. KURTAN – IZAR

It is said that in the past, Kashmiris, particularly in rural areas, did not wear undergarments. Only men and women of religious classes among Muslims and official classes and landed elite among Hindus used undergarments. In urban Kashmir, particularly in Srinagar, with the establishment of Sikh rule (1819. A. D) people began using trousers.

However, Hindus wear “Kutneh” or “Pajama” and Muslims “Izaar” as undergarments. “Kurtan, Kameez (shirts) are also used by both the communities with some variation. However, dress and its design in Kashmiris has undergone a great change and the process is still going on.

3. TARANGH

Panditanis wear Pherans of different colours and fasten a white cloth round their waists. This part of the costume is called “Tarangh”. Though it is not a part of “Pheran” yet Pheran and “Tarangh” are worn at the same time. “Tarangh” is used as headgear too, but not without “Pheran”. “Tarangh” is a piece of cloth, rounded on “Takain” (a small cap), usually surrounded with a fillet of red cloth. Sometimes, in place of “Takain” a “Kalposh” was used and the “Poouch” (a chadar) was used over shoulders. “Tarangh” is not used by unmarried Pandit girls. It is an important article of dress for the wedding day. “Tarangh” is like the “Kasaba” of Muslim women but with various modifications and differences. “Tarangh” has been referred to in “Vanvun” songs of Pandits.

4. KALE – VALIUN

Head dress is called “Kale - Valuin” in Kashmiri. People wear different types of caps, particularly in rural areas such as “Araq Cheen” (a cap made of cotton cloth). It is used by men when they are at work in their fields. Another type of cap is called “Zaiebail”. It has small holes and those holes are beautified by needle work. Some people call it “Sozen Tope” as well. Some people wear leather caps, particularly called “Kara Cooali”.

Common peasants call it "Taaich" as well. During winter all Kashmiris use head dress of different types, made of woollen material such as "Jagar, Kantoap, leather caps, etc. "Dastar" (Turban) was a symbol of honour for well-to-do Kashmiris, Hindus as well as Muslims. In the Dogra period "Dastaar" (Pagri) was an important part of uniform of school going children. Hindus used pink colour "Dastar" and Muslims liked green and white dastars. Dastars were of various kinds such as "Goore Dastar (Dastars used by milkmen), Pathan Dastar (Dastars used by Pathans, The Afgani's), Dogra Dastar (Pagris used by Dogras), etc. Sikhs of the valley wear the Pagris like their counterparts in other places of India. Dastar is now rare in Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims. Only some religious men wear it at different occasions. According to Sir Walter Lawrence, "The ordinary headdress of the Kashmiri cultivator, when he is at work, is cotton skull cap, but on state occasions, he dons a white Pagri. The fashionable Kashmiri likes to wear his Pagri rather on the back of his head and displays a large amount of forehead. In the past children were made to use "Takain" and "Kalposh" - Takain was for girls and "Kalposh" for both girls and boys.

5. KASABH

Kasabh was a peculiar head dress of Muslim women of Kashmir. Kasabh was made with full care by an expert lady. A "Takain" (round skull-cap, usually used by unmarried girls) was covered with a piece of cloth, tightly turn after turn. A number of pins with beautiful head points were attached to it. A piece of cloth was attached to Kasabh, which worked as a veil to cover the entire back. Kasabh was of three types, Khund Kasabh, Bon Kasabh and Thod Kasabh. It was not allowed to be worn by unmarried girls. To prepare and use a Kasabh was timeconsuming and a complicated work. Kasabh for brides was adorned by a colourful piece of cloth and innumerable safety pins.

As against Kasabh, the headdress of Kashmiri Pandit women was "Tarangh".

6. KHOR – VALIUN

Footwear in Kashmiri is called “Khor-Valun”. In the past Kashmiris used footwear made of local material. With the passage of time changes took place in their footwear. Some of the kinds of footwear used in the past are discussed below:

A. PULHOR

It was a common piece of footwear, made of paddy grass. Foreigners called it “Straw sandal”. Every villager was expert to make his “Pulhor” from a wisp of rice straw. Bandages of woolen cloth, the well-known “Pach Daeh” (a big piece of woolen cloth) was wound around the half of the leg, called “Paatov”. Feet in Pulhor and legs in “Paatov” was the best support for long journeys. Pulhor was used by all Kashmiris, particularly in rural Kashmir. A beautiful “Pulhor” was sent as gift to married daughters at special occasions.

B. KHRAW

Khraw was a slipper - type wooden footwear. It was usually made of willow wood. In rural Kashmir, every family used to get a “Khraw” prepared for all its members in the beginning of winter. “Pulhor” was used when a villager intended to set out on foot to any distant place, but the “Khraw” was used in courtyard and some times, when a villager had to go to any place within the boundaries of the village. Like “Pulhor” Khraw was used by men, women and children.

C. PEAZAAR

A type of leather shoes, called “Peazaar”, was used by well-off Kashmiris, particularly in Srinagar. Another type of leather shoes, called “Kowansh”, was used by the well-to-do. Usually leather shoes were rough and untanned.

Numerous references about the footwear mentioned above, can be found in Kashmiri folk literature. There are folk songs, phrases and sayings available in the vernacular about footwear.

FARMERS' FESTIVALS

Kashmiris were basically agriculturists. Agriculture and horticulture are the back-bone of the economy of Kashmir. It needs hard work and much time. Agriculture depends upon good weather, sufficient water and protection from natural calamities such as hailstorms, drought, untimely snowfall, etc. Every cultivator hopes for good and safe crops. Although modern scientific techniques are applied for the purpose yet cultivators use some traditional ways for keeping bad omens off their full years's hard work and labour. They perform some ceremonies and rituals, distribute alms and recite religious hymns. In the past, the superstitious ceremonies and customs related to "Zamindari" were great in number. With the passage of time, a number of all these superstitions have been forgotten. Some peasants used to tie votive threads and rags at the shrines of saints and some used to bring "Tubruk" from Pir to stop the "Rai" (Blast) from infesting their paddy crop. "Pir Khairath" was prepared and distributed for safety of good crops. From the beginning to the end of "Zamindari" peasants used to observe many ceremonies and rituals.

1. BUM SINE KAH

"Bum Sine Kah" is a ceremony performed by Kashmiri Pandits on the eleventh day of the waning moon in the month of Maagh. It is said that Bhim Sain, one of the Pandvas, urged to observe fast on the tenth, eleventh and twelfth days of the month of "Maagh". On the second day of his fast he felt severe hunger. The day passed and he was bound to observe fast during night also. In the night he lit a fire to give assurance to his mother that he passed the night quite well. As a tradition, it is said that on the same day the earth regains internal heat after long winter. It is called "Tauembur or Jambur". After this day air and water gains warmth and it is deemed as message of spring, sowing seeds and starting Zamindari. Kashmir Pandits observe fast and perform special prayers on this day.

2. GUNGUL

Gungul is a ritual and ceremony performed on the day of beginning work in fields by Kashmiri cultivators. After a long and hard winter, when snow melts away from the plains of Kashmir, peasants start agricultural work. Commonly the day has been fixed "Novroz". It falls on twenty first of March. First the peasants prepare the land for sowing vegetable seeds and begin to plough it. They start planting trees. A hustle and bustle is seen in the villages. But "Novroz" has a religious sanctity as well. It is "Idd-e-Novroz" for Shia Muslims. However, cultivators celebrate this festival in various ways. They prepare a good feast and carry it to their fields in baskets and eat in the fields. All the family members take part in it. In this way they enjoy an outing after a chilly winter. Walnuts, almonds and other dry fruits are distributed. In the evening a "Moulvi" is invited. He performs special prayers for the deceased of the family and prays to God for the good crops. He is served good food. This process is called "Gungul". It can be found in Nilmat Purana, so it is very ancient festival (called "Krisya Rambha"- in the Nilmat Purana).

"At first one should plough the auspicious earth which is already inclined (to receive the seed). O, twice born well decorated, one should eat in the centre of the field, in the company of friends, wife and dependants. A festival full of singing and dancing should be celebrated with heart – enchanting sounds of musical instruments".

With time the "gungul" festival has now lost its charm.

3. HEAL BALE

With the commencement of the formation of tassels of paddy plants, peasants used to offer animal sacrifices to keep away diseases like "Rai" (the blast) from their paddy crop. It was believed that evil spirits cannot harm the crop. A sheep, ram or a goat was slaughtered at a fixed place near the fields collectively by some families. Major portion of the meat was scattered around the fields for "Moakls" (the invisible supernatural

watchers of the fields and crops). A small portion was distributed among the peasants who had offered the collective sacrifice. Sometimes a single family used to offer the sacrifice separately. With the passage of time, people began to slaughter a cock instead of an animal on the occasion and invite a "Moulvi" to recite the quran and offer prayer. The custom is very rarely observed now. In the past "Khatme-Shareef" and "Avrade-Fateh" were recited by "Moulvis" invited for the purpose. The sacrifice is called "Hael Bale" ("Hael" means "Tassels" and Bale" is "Bali", sacrifice). Now, it is called "Hael Kokur" (slaughtering a cock on the formation of tassels of paddy plants).

4. NOV KARUN

"Nov Karun" or "Nov Deun" means to celebrate the occasion on which new crops particularly the rice and wheat are cooked for first time after the harvest is completed. After thrashing the paddy, it is husked and the rice is cooked. Some dishes of meat of ram are prepared. In the past "Khatm-e-Shareef" or "Avrad-e-Fateh" was arranged on the day. Some Moulvis were invited for recitation of the Quran. Daughters were invited alongwith their families on the feast by their fathers. "Tahar" (rice cooked in oil) and "Nateh Tahar" (rice mixed with meat) were distributed among children and neighbours. Some people used to offer the "New rice" to their local shrines. In the evening all family members were served a good feast. All this process was called "Nov - Karun". These customs are mentioned in Kashmiri folksongs, such as:

SOANTEH KOAR GUNGUL TE HARDEH KOAR NOVYAI
VANEDAT BOUYAI SHAHVOLGAY

(We celebrated "Gungul" in the spring and after harvest, celebrated "Nov Karun". O, "Shah Volugh" ("Shah Volugh was best variety of paddy in past") this year, your product is in abundance.) Now, people do not celebrate "Nov Karun" with the same fervour as it was celebrated in the past.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. KASHUR CALENDAR

The names of the Kashur Calendar months are:-

Waheq, Zaith, Haar, Shrawvun, Baader, Aeshid, Kartik, Monjhour, Poh, Maagh, Phagun, Chither,

Ghulam Hassan Shah Khoihami, a noted historian has written in his *History of Kashmir* that Sultan Shamsudin gave the names to the months of this calendar according to the names of the months of Yazdgari calendar of Persia but the noted scholar Dr. Gulshan Majeed says:

The Kashmiri months are with three exceptions the exact reproduction of the Indian months. Three exceptions are Waheq, Monjhour, Haar. But when we compare the Indo Kashmiri months with the old Persian calendar of Darius there are more significant correspondences between the two.

The calendar introduced by Sultan Shamsudin lasted for near about 264 years. It is also called the Kashur (Kashmiri) calendar. It lost public popularity with the beginning of Mughal rule in Kashmir.

The names of the months of Kushur calendar still hold sway. These have been used randomly in Kashmiri folk literature and are still used by Kashmiri poets. Some people living in the remote rural areas of Kashmir still allude to the months especially for undertaking and initiating their agricultural activities. Festivals (Urs) held in honour of the renowned Kashmiri saints and sufis are celebrated by and large according to the months and dated of Kashmiri calendar such as the Urs of Hazrat Sheikh Noorudin Reshi (R.A) is always celebrated on twenty sixth of Poh of the Kashmiri calendar. The Urs of Hazrat Baba Naseebudin Gazi (R.A) is celebrated on the fourteenth of Haar.

2. CHILAI KALAAAN

"Chilai Kalaan" is a term derived from combination of two

Persian words "Chihal" ("Chileh in Kashmiri) and "Kalan" ("Boed" the long and broad), meaning "the long and broad forty days". Commonly, winter in Kashmir is very hard and long, spread over more than three months. Kashmiris have divided the severe cold period of the winter into three parts. The severe cold period starts on twenty-first or twenty-second of December and lasts for forty days, which is called "Chilai Kalan". During these days cold becomes intense, rivers freeze, heavy snow falls in intervals and "Kat Koush" occurs. During the occurrence of "Kat Koush" moisture in the air seems to freeze. After the forty days of the hard and pinching cold "Chilai Kalan", other part of the winter season starts, which is called "Chilai Khorad" (the small "Chileh"). It lasts for twenty days. Though there is severe cold in this part yet "Kat Koush" ends and the snowfall is not as heavy as in "Chilai Kalan". Next comes "Chileh Bache" (the baby Chileh,). It lasts for ten days on the end of February. Kashmiris always make preparations for "Chileh Kalan". They purchase Kangreh, woolen clothes and other things to face the "Chilai Kalan" effectively.

3. VAKTACH BAGHNAI

Kashmiris have distributed time into different segments. This process is called "Vaktach Baghnai" in Kashmiri. Though some terms have undergone change or become obsolete and other alternatives have taken their place but a number of terms and name of different time units are still in vogue. The first unit is called "Brunz" which is equal to a second, just a flip of the finger. Other name for "Brunz" in Kashmiri is "Roum". "Roum" is used for some other purposes as well. "Racteh" is also called a "Brunz". Twelve or thirteen "Brunz" make a "Tsyuh" and sixty "Tsyuh" are a "Gaar". $7\frac{1}{2}$ "Gaareh" make a "Pahar" and four "Pahars" a day. Eight "Pahars" (24 hours) are "Dohraat". Seven days a "Haftah". Two "Haftas" a "Pach" and two "Pachs" make a month (lunar month). 24 "Pachas" are a "Wari" (a year of 12 lunar months). "Adraat" or "Nasaf raat" is used for "midnight" and 3 A.M is "Patim Pahar". Cock

crowing is "Kukar Baang". The time just before daybreak is called "Gazal" by Muslim and "Brahma Muhurat" by Hindus. Daybreak is "Nyuk Nyuk Gash" and "Sunat" and sunrise is "Subah". About 2 ½ hours after sunrise, it is "Ad Koj" and after 4 ½ hours of sunrise is "Koj". Midday is called "Du Pahar or Mandeun" and about 2 P.M it is "Peshin". "Se Pahar" is at about 3 P.M and about 3:30 P.M is "Nimuz" (for Muslims) and "Mimuz" (for Hindus). Sunset is called "Ad Digar". "Shaam" is evening and "Khuftan" is bedtime at about 9:30 P.M.

4. GINDEN

Sir Walter Lawrence writes:

There are no games for young or old, and in the villages there is no leisure for games. Life is terribly earnest, and the child who can walk can work.

It is a fact that there was paucity of games for grown ups and old people, male or female. There is no detailed mention in historical narrations as well. "Pahalwan Dab Dab" (wrestling), Lori Jang (Sling fighting) and some minor "Gindne" (games) had gained popularity in the past. It is not a fact that Kashmiri had no game instincts, as some foreigners have recorded. Dr. Farooq Fayaz discusses the reason as under:

Being aware of the significance of physical fitness and mental soundness, Kashmiris amid poverty and exploitation, developed more taste for cheap sports activities rather than the big and expensive sports exercises. Their liking for less time consuming folk games is suggestive of their busy working schedule. Rural people from their very childhood either worked as bonded agricultural labourers on the lands of their absentee feudal lords or worked as born debt industrial labourers in the clumsy factories of wealthy "Karkhandars" in Srinagar city. Under such inhuman conditions, how could Kashmiris have developed taste and liking for games of royal and elite nature.

During the twentieth century games like cricket, hockey, football were introduced and have gained popularity. Not only the

above mentioned games but games which are played in other countries are also played in Kashmir. Kashmir valley has already produced a number of world famous players.

5. SHURE GINDNE

There were number of games (Gindne) popular among children, both male and female, in the valley from ancient times. All the "Gindne" are of folk nature. No Gindun (game) ever needed any special gear. Most of the "Gindne" are accompanied by songs and the songs are called the "Gindne Baeth" (play songs). Some of the "Gindne" are:

Eny Katar, Kath Shalay Bam Saz Long, Okus Bokus, Ate Sawary, Chep-Chour, Leth Kig Loth, Tulay Loungun, Istambaray, Gieer Bachan, Aaro Barov.

A collection of "Shure Gindne" (children's games) was compiled by Ghulam Nabi Nazir in his book "Kashri Gindne Trai" in 1972. Fifty "Gindne" of male children, 12 "Gindne" of female children and 19 "Gindne" of both the sexes, are mentioned and discussed in the book. But almost all the "Gindne" have met extinction by now. Modern games are now played by the children of Kashmir such as Carom, snake & ladder, chess, cricket, kho kho, hockey, tennis, volley ball, foot ball, etc.



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